COMIC WORLD

MAY 1995 ISSUE 39

The X-Files Competition

Goddess
She's No Angel!

Jack Kirby
The King of Comics

Fantastic Four
Sovereign Seven

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COMIC WORLD

MAY 1995 ISSUE 39

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Cover: Expand your mind with **Goddess** by Phil Winslade. The long-awaited mini-series written by Garth Ennis stars Rosie Nolan, an ordinary young girl with a unique and frighteningly destructive psychic power. Goddess is © Garth Ennis & Phil Winslade. Look what happened to the copyright infringers on the cover and be afraid. Be very afraid.

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Comic World

UP-fRONT

Only last month I was talking about distribution and promoting product into retailers and (ultimately) the consumers. Lo and behold, the biggest item of news to break about the publisher/distributor/retailer chain in years breaks as we were on our way to the printers. After a moment of hair-pulling - because I'm like any other journalist looking for a scoop - it looks like that delay in writing about the situation may have taken the edge off my my initial reaction.

What the hell are they doing? That was the first hysterical reaction from a lot of people. The facts as they appeared are chronicled in our news section, but as of writing this very little else has emerged. The facts, as they stand, are simply that Marvel are going to be distributing their own titles through Heroes World Distribution which they've owned since December 1994.

In the UK, which is what we're concerned about here, all that is known is that a UK office is in the process of being set up which will facilitate distribution of Marvel and Malibu titles. At the moment nobody's too sure about the distribution of other related companies, Fleer trading cards, ToyBiz toys, and the recently acquired Skybox. According to Diamond Distributors, Marvel account for only around 22% of their total business in the UK - lower than in the USA since their distribution also includes science fiction books and British editions of items not carried in the States. Marvel are not quite the all assimilating Borg that everyone seems to make them out to be. The world has not been heading for the Marvel Event Horizon.

Let's bat around a couple of ideas and see if they hold true in six months: Marvel rely on retail outlets to get to the consumer - whoever distributes them, the reader is at the end of the chain. So destabilising the direct market is not their intention. It is, in fact, in their best interests to work closer with retailers to maximise their sales. I think that's what they'll do, on a global scale anyway. How that affects their UK retailing only time will tell.

Second statement: with the buying up they've been doing - toys, trading cards, an L.A. office that puts them on the doorstep of Hollywood - their comics become an even more important area since it is the one *creative* area within the whole structure. Everything else is geared to market and merchandise the characters created in the comics. Falling sales for long established characters (except X-Men and Spider-Man) has been a steady trend for quite a while. So, my guess is that we'll see lots of new characters with built-in packaging potential.

They're calling it Marvelution - the evolution of Marvel Comics. I call it a Golden Opportunity to rid themselves of tired old characters and concepts, to bring in new creative talents, to think about *why* sales are down and do something about it.

Only time will tell.

Steve

Marvel to self-distribute through heroes world

MARVEL COMICS

OTHER PUBLISHERS MAY SIGN EXCLUSIVE DEALS

In early March, Marvel Entertainment Group accidentally "announced" their intentions to exclusively distribute their own comics through the recently purchased Heroes World Distribution Inc. via a letter sent out with copies of the June *Mega Marvel*, the advance listings magazine for Marvel and Malibu titles.

In Britain, the news first broke on Monday, March 6, when British retailers began receiving phone-calls from Jess Deacon saying he would now be the head of the British office of Marvel's new self-distribution system in the UK. Deacon, one-time General Manager of Titan Distributors who left the latter company on August 31 1994 citing health reasons, then flew to New York, since when no further announcements have been made.

The March 8 dated edition of *Diamond Dateline*, a 4-page retailers newsletter, included "An important message for Diamond [Distributors] Customers" which stated that on Wednesday, March 2 (sic), Diamond's Purchasing Department had received an advance copy of *Mega Marvel* as usual only to discover the inclusion of a letter from Marvel VP Matt Ragone which said in part:

"As you have probably heard, Marvel and Heroes World Distribution have announced their future. Marvel and Heroes World will proceed with the next step in Marvelution - the exclusive distribution of Marvel products commencing with July shipping."

"Needless to say," the unsigned statement continued, "we had NOT heard this news! Though we anticipated from the day they purchased Heroes World that it was a question of when, not if, Marvel would go exclusive, Marvel had not provided us with a time frame or any other information. In fact, just days before, we had received a one-month Trade Terms extension from Marvel, indicating no change in the status quo.

"When we called to check on the accuracy of the information in Ragone's letter, we discovered that...Ragone's letter wasn't meant for advance distribution, but had been included by mistake.

"In any case, we then asked Marvel for official confirmation and clarification of their intentions. The next day a brief letter arrived via fax from Marvel Comics President Terry Stewart confirming to Diamond Comic Distributors that its distribution arrangement is terminated with Marvel effective July 1, 1995."

The letter from Ragone was posted on Internet by John Dennett of Dark Horse and states in part, "While opinions may continue to swirl around the industry about the impact of this change, the fact is that no segment of this industry is satisfied with 1994 performance levels, or early 1995 performance. Sales and profits are down at every level and retailers report that customer profit is down."

From one distributor the move elicited an immediate reaction: Capital City Distribution of Madison, Wisconsin, filed suit in a Madison Federal Court against Marvel stating that the move violated the Wisconsin Fair Dealership Law. Marvel, they

FRANK MILLER SLA

The following item was posted by Frank Miller on the InterNet:

"Can everybody stop apologising for them now? For decades, Marvel Comics has denied who created their characters, who made their comics worth reading. Now, having driven the best talent away, they face plummeting sales. Desperate, and terminally unable to admit that it is their own historic mistake that has made their comics so lousy, they turn on the distributors and merchants themselves, applying the same grab-it-all, control-it-all mentality that drove the writers and artists and readers away. You folk who distribute the comics, now you know exactly what they did to the artists who gave loyal service to Marvel, who showed Marvel goodwill.

"Can everybody stop apologising for them now? No, it ain't just business. It's the livelihoods of a lot of people who have done their best to sell Marvel Comics. It's the future of a vital industry and a unique story form. It's the future of comics. With their latest, crude, clumsy attempt to reverse the course of comics history, Marvel comics resembles nothing more than the last, and final, Soviet Parliament. The army, in our case, is thee retailers, and the readers.

"Marvel Comics is out of steam. They aren't even trying to compete on a creative level. They've declared war on the free market. They've made it clear that they want to exercise dictatorial power over the comics market, and, from all appearances, they're willing to destroy the market before they are willing to change their stupid policies or to take their proper

said, accounted for 40% of their comic sales and profits for the firm were expected to fall by 60% if Marvel followed through with their decision. The action, filed on March 3, was countered by a suit filed by Marvel in New York to see if grounds existed for the charge. The claim was settled out of court within a week, although the terms remain undisclosed.

Meanwhile, both DC Comics and Dark Horse told *Comic World* that they were looking into various options but had no further comments to make. It is rumoured that DC will sign an exclusive deal with Diamond Distributors and others are likely to follow their lead, but as of writing that's purely rumour.

Heroes World in the UK

Speaking for the newly formed British end of Heroes World on March 28, Jess Deacon told *Comic World:* "There are a lot of things still in negotiation, but all the British and European retailers on our mailing list will be receiving our first mailing shortly with a second mailing detailing prices, discounts and trade terms following soon after." Heroes World Distribution will be a division of Marvel UK Ltd. since the latter company is already established. Shipments to the UK and parts of Europe will be flown in through Heathrow where a warehouse is being negotiated.

Deacon, who became an employee of Marvel on March 1 after some weeks of negotiation, said he was pleased to be back in the world of comic distribution, "and surprised," he added. "But they made an offer it would have been foolish to turn down.

Deacon's first task was a 10-day trip to New York to begin discussions about trade terms for UK retailers, having already contacted as many customers as he could. "I heard every shade of opinion on the subject. The biggest worry seemed to be the loss of the status quo. That seemed to upset a lot of people. There have been lots of foolish rumours, which ignore the fact that Marvel need the retailer base on their side. For obvious reasons, Marvel are not going to pull some of the things rumoured.

"We had hoped that we would be in a position to solicit product in April for June shipping, but that seems unlikely. But there's still enough time to get everything ready for the May solicitations shipping in July, which is when we need everything in place.

"The meeting with retailers at the New York Hilton [*Marvel's first face-to-face with retailers in America on Friday March 24*] went very well. I think by the end of the day everyone went away happy with the terms they were being offered. Marvel will be visiting every major city to meet retailers, and we are currently setting up an open day in London for May 1."

Titan no more

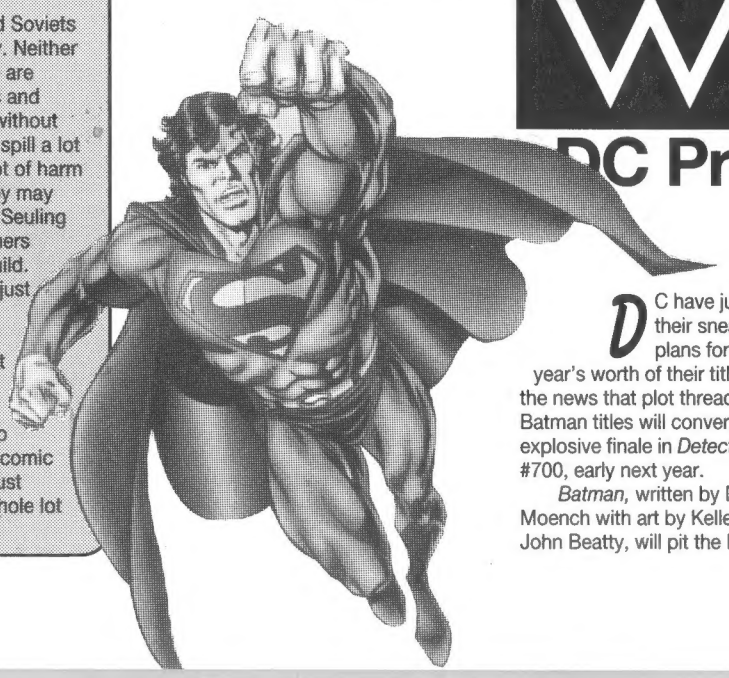
Titan Distributors, suffixed for some time with "A Diamond International Company" recently combined the operations of Titan and Diamond (UK), and will be closing the latter's warehouse in West Drayton in June to concentrate their organisation in East London. The company will now be called Diamond Comic Distributors, effective as of the April advance order listings due to ship in June.

S MARVEL

place in the market as a fading giant.

"Those drunken old Soviets couldn't reverse history. Neither will Marvel Comics. We are headed for better times and better comics, with or without Marvel Comics. They'll spill a lot of blood and cause a lot of harm on their way down. They may even destroy what Phil Seuling began and so many others busted their butts to build. But, ultimately, they're just one publisher among many, one bloated, old symbol of an order best left in our past.

"My very best wishes to all of you who run or are employed in comic book shops. Marvel's just made a tough year a whole lot tougher. Good luck."



Marvel buys SkyBox

On Thursday, March 9, Marvel entered into a definitive agreement with SkyBox International Inc. to acquire the trading card company for $16 per share in cash, a total of approximately $150 million. Marvel already owns the Fleer trading card company which generates some $300 million in sales a year, mostly from sports cards which account for 75% of their takings. This should see a dramatic upswing, as SkyBox handle both *Star Trek* and Disney licenses, and also have a strong presence in the basketball sports cards market.

No announcements have been made as to how Marvel intends to distribute its trading cards or ToyBiz toys.

PRICES RISING

The price of paper has been rising faster in 1995 than at any other time in the past 50 years, already up from $400 a ton to $700, with a further increase of 40% expected by the end of the year. The price for newsprint and other lower grades (traditionally the domain of comics) is rising faster than in other areas, doubling the problems faced by comic publishers who are already struggling with a market that has shrunk since a high in the summer of 1993.

DC have reacted by raising prices, but at the same time have upgraded the quality of paper used on many titles which shipped throughout March and April. The new formats replacing the old standard DC paperstock are: for the Batman/Superman titles - Miraweb, and now priced $1.95; Fracote and a $2.50 tag for the Milestone and licensed products; and Rebax for the Vertigo line, which will now cost you $2.25 or $2.50.

One title that will fall in price however will be *Hardware #29*, the first title in Milestone's 'Reader's Choice' programme which will offer a sampler title for the next seven months at a budget 99c.

Marvel have already dropped a number of titles printed on lower grade paper, most notably the move of the X-books and *Hulk* to a higher grade 'Deluxe' format over the standard format with an accompanying price hike.

Image, who have said their prices would remain constant, have increased the amount of advertising they accept from outside the Image group, and hope to maintain their prices.

A number of smaller publishers have had to increase their prices as well, with more increases likely before the end of the year. We at *Comic World* are predicting a large number of 'Collectors' editions with low-cost enhancements at disproportionately higher prices for the summer.

In The WORKS

DC Preview new titles

DC have just released their sneak preview plans for the next year's worth of their titles, including the news that plot threads from all the Batman titles will converge in an explosive finale in *Detective Comics* #700, early next year.

Batman, written by Doug Moench with art by Kelley Jones & John Beatty, will pit the Dark Knight against Killer Croc and, later, stage a violent reunion with Swamp Thing. Chuck Dixon, Graham Nolan & Scott Hanna continue their run on *Detective,* as do Alan Grant, Barry Kitson & Ray McCarthy on *Shadow of the Bat*, which will be crossing over with *Catwoman* some time in the future. Mike Wieringo debuts on *Robin* with issue 19, whilst Scott Hampton, James Vance, Dougie Braithwaite, Mark Millar, Dick Giordano and many others are lined up to tell *Legends of the Dark Knight.*

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In The WORKS CONTINUED

June 6 sees the release of the *Batman Forever* movie adaptation by Dennis O'Neil, Mike Dutkiewicz & Scott Hanna, ten days before the movie's release in the USA. The 64

page prestige format one-shot is priced $5.95 with a mando edition priced $3.95. Before that, DC are shipping three specials featuring some of the stars of the film: *Batman: Two Face - Crime and Punishment* by J.M. DeMatteis & Scott McDaniel shows (in 48 prestige pages) what happens when Two-Face decides his hideous madness is the fault of Gotham City; *Batman: Riddler - The Riddle Factory* (48-pages, prestige format) by Matt Wagner & Dave Taylor has Edward Nigma ascend to celebrity status when he starts exposing the secrets of Gotham's rich and famous - including Bruce Wayne; and *Nightwing: Alfred's Return* links two of Batman's oldest allies, Dick Grayson and Alfred - who bitterly separated from Bruce during 'Knightfall'. Alan Grant & Dick Giordano plot his return to continuity via 64 standard format pages. Two trade paperbacks, *Batman: featuring Two-Face and The Riddler* by various, and *Batman: Faces* (from *Legends #28-30*) by Matt Wagner, ship June 13 and June 20 respectively.

Later in the year you can experience the *Vengeance of Bane II* (More Vengeful?) by Chuck Dixon, Graham Nolan & Eduardo Barreto, the long-awaited *Batman: Man-Bat* 3-issue Elseworlds series by Jamie Delano & John Bolton, a Legends Halloween special, *Batman: Ghosts* by Jeph Loeb & Tim Sale which takes Batman on "a Dickensian journey into the past, present and future", *Batman: The Ultimate Evil*, based on the novel by Andrew Vachss, adapted by Neal Barratt, Jr., Denys Cowan & Prentis Rollins, *Batman: Black & White*, a 4-issue series with a pulp feel to it and stories by Alex Toth, Richard Corben, Jose Munoz, Bill Sienkiewicz, Joe Kubert, Ted McKeever and others, *Batman: GCPD*, 4 issues by Chuck Dixon & Jim Aparo about the other crimefighters of Gotham; Dick Grayson gets his own *Nightwing* 4-issue series via Dennis O'Neil, Greg Land & Michael Sellers, and following in the footsteps of the animated show, *Batman Adventures* will become The *Batman and Robin Adventures* and relaunch from #1 with stories by Paul Dini (who penned the excellent *Batman: Mad Love*) and Ty Templeton.

Superman, with the additional *Man of Tomorrow* quarterly meaning an issue every week, will be brought to his knees by thee returning Lex Luthor and a villainess - and if that wasn't enough, he'll be tried and convicted by an intergalactic court for Krypton's destruction. An ancient Superman will explore a post-apocalyptic Elseworld in *Superman: At Earth's End* by Tom Veitch & Frank Gomez later this year, and the origin of the Eradicator will be reprinted in a 160-page *Superman: Eradication!* trade paperback.

Superman will also be facing his toughest enemy to date when DC and Dark Horse launch the 3-issue *Superman vs Aliens* by Dan Jurgens & Kevin Nowlan this May, and hot on their heels will be *Darkseid vs Galactus: The Hunger* with Marvel, written and illustrated by John Byrne.

Batman and Judge Dredd will be back in action together in *The Ultimate Riddle* by Alan Grant, John Wagner & Carl Critchlow, and Dredd faces an even weirder challenge in *Lobo/Judge Dredd: Psycho Bikers vs The Mutants from Hell* one-shot by Wagner-Grant and illustrated by Val Semeiks & John Dell.

Judge Dredd: The Official Movie Adaptation will ship on June 13, a 64-page prestige format one-shot by Andy Helfer & Carlos Ezquerra which sees Dredd stripped of his rank and sent to prison...I'm not saying anything more! DC's rotating story title, *Judge Dredd: Legends of the Law* has stories by John Byrne & Tommy Lee Edwards, Walt Simonson & Richard Case, Grant Morrison, Mark Millar & Chris Weston, John Wagner & Steve Lightle, and Dave Gibbons lined up.

Superboy will be travelling into the future to join up with DC's 30th Century heroes...maybe. A crossover will first bring the Legionnaires back to the 20th Century where they meet

Superboy who travels back to the future with them. Only time will tell if he stays.

More crossovers for DC Universe heroes are due for the summer, starting with 'The Siege of Zi Charam', a 5-part x-over running through *The New Titans #124, Green Lantern #65, Darkstars #34, Damage #16* and *New Titans #125*, in which the Titans are flung to the furthest reaches of the galaxy and face a moral dilemma: to save the universe from the threat of The Progenitors, a race of being totally devoted to the conquest and destruction of all other forms of life, or allow their supposed allies to wipe the Progenitors from the face of the universe with a terrifying new bio-weapon. You can see which side the coin falls from June 20.

Then there's *Crossline*, a mysterious character who passes through a dimensional rift to find the superhero who killed his wife. Crossline himself is being sought by three hunters. The x-over will pass through eight DC Universe titles and will leave several DC heroes dead.

Wonder Woman #101 sees the arrival of John Byrne to the one major character he's yet to draw and a new era for Princess Di. Having now reclaimed her rights to be called the Avenging Amazon, she faces Darkseid of Apokolips as he tries to learn the fate of the ancient Greek gods - knowledge that could spell disaster for humanity.

One of the most attractive new titles on offer is Mark Waid and Alex Ross' *Kingdom Come*, an Elseworlds look into the not-too-distant future. Judgement Day will mark the fate of many DC superheroes and with the Spectre as our guide we will see the rise of a new dark breed of adventurers. The 4-issue series will debut in 1996.

Vertigo

With *The Sandman* due to end with issue 75, with #70-73 comprising 'The Wake' with art by Michael Zulli, #74 with art by Jon J Muth, and #75 being 'The Tempest' with art by Charles Vess. But fear not, Sandfans, because *The Dreaming* is an ongoing series set in the unexplored realm of Dreams featuring many familiar faces. *Sandman Midnight Theatre Special* is by Neil Gaiman, Matt Wagner & Teddy Kristiansen, linking the modern Sandman with that of the Golden Age in a story that harks back to issue 1 (and *Comic World #27* where Neil first discussed it).

Mythos: The Final Tour by John Ney Reiber, Gary Amaro, Peter Snejbjerg & Teddy Kristiansen sees a gifted musician become a myth when his music draws the attention of Pain who, aided by an unearthly beauty and a host of disgruntled deities, tries to sway the young man to the cause of destruction.

The Horrorist is a 2-issue series due in 1996 from Jamie Delano & David Lloyd in which John Constantine confronts an elemental force that is the spirit of all suffering.

June 27 sees the delayed arrival of *Egypt* by Peter Milligan & Glyn Dillon, the story of Vincent Me, a penniless, hopeless drifter and womaniser who is the subject of a student experiment to recreate a near-death experience...only Vincent wakes up in a world where Gods walk the earth.

Industrial Gothic is a 5-issue series by Ted McKeever set in a world where ugliness is a punishable offence; *Millenium Fever* is a 4-issue romantic comedy by Nick Abadzis & Duncan Fegredo; and there's the Vertigo Verite banner which will concentrate on more slice-of-life stories such as Peter Kuper's *The System* and Peter Milligan's Girl...and *Vamps* returns for a second series by Elaine Lee & Will Simpson.

The regular Vertigo titles continue with little change; 'The Hour Man' storyline in *Sandman Mystery Theatre* revives the Golden Age hero in the latest story (#29-32) and Chris Western, John Ridgway & Steve Parkhouse are lined up for stories in *The Invisibles*; added to the monthly line-up is *The Seekers* by J.M. DeMatteis and a rotating cast of artists including Glenn Barr, Jon J Muth and Michael Zulli, described as the *X-Files* meets the New Age.

Paradox

DC's cutting-edge imprint of large-size and paperback-sized books fall easily into two groups: the Factoid books continue with *The Big Book of Conspiracies*, 224 pages written by Doug Moench with art by Brett Ewins, Rick Geary, Michael Avon Oeming, Kev O'Neill, Richard Piers Raynor, Baron Storey, Brian Talbot and many others, which ships June 27...unless it's all a plot to make us think they're releasing the book, Patti? Maureen?...*The Big Book of Little Criminals* and *The Big Book of Freaks*, written by Gahan Wilson, should follow.

The Paradox Mystery line continues with the 3-volume *Hunter's Heart* on June 13, written by Randy DuBurke about two cops on the trail of a serial killer who discover vast forces ranged against them and that the killer has powerful political connections that threaten the turn the hunters into the hunted. *Green Candles* by Tom DeHaven and Robin Smith will follow, a psychological thriller about a small-time detective and a client who is terrorised by someone mailing her photos of a melting candle.

The Project by John Figueroa & Kirk Etienne will be the next Paradox Fiction title, an uncompromising look at

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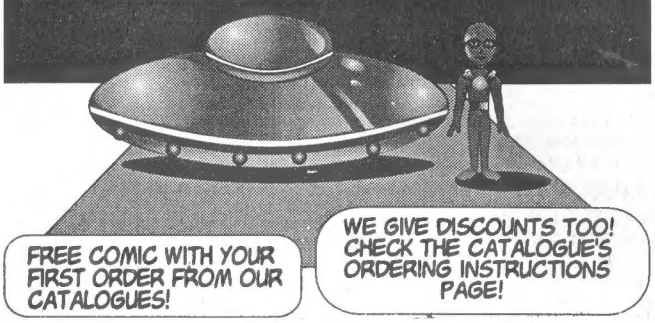

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life in a huge inner-city housing project told through twelve interconnected short stories; *Stuck Rubber Baby* is Howard Cruse's tale of racial bigotry and sexual awakening in the South at the height of the Civil Liberties movement.

Abstract Studio

Terry Moore's funny, touching, romantic comedy, *Strangers in Paradise* is receiving a lot of attention at the moment, and in May, latecomers to the story of Katchoo and her neurotic roommate Francine will be able to catch on with the second printing of #1. The collected *Strangers in Paradise Volume 1* is also available.

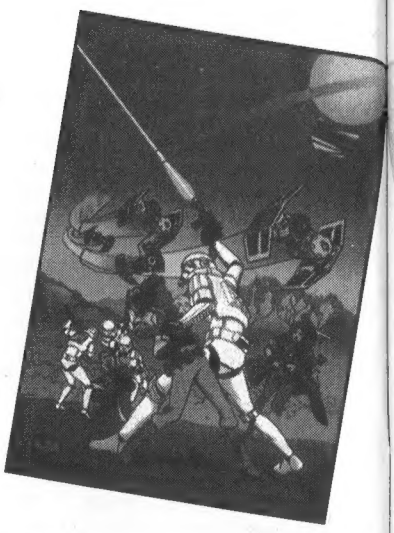
Dark Horse

May launches from Dark Horse include new *Star Wars, Godzilla* and *Tarzan* titles. First, though, *Aliens vs Predator: War #1*, a 4-parter by Stradley, Manley & Villagran. The story picks up some time after the events of Dark Horse's first *AvP* series and stars Machiko, now a fully-fledged Predator although she must still fight for her right to hunt. The Preds converge on the seed planet, Bunda, for the bug hunt to end all bug hunts; but when a new group of humans show up the hunt becomes more than a game.

Star Wars: River of Chaos #1 launches a new 4-parter by Louise Simonson, June Brigman & Roy Richardson, set a few months after the destruction of the Death Star on the distant planet of M'Haeli where Princess Leia finds herself behind enemy lines and trying to undermine the enemy from within.

Someone's out for revenge on the King of the monsters in *Godzilla #0*. Can Professor Yoshiwara use her killer bee missile to kill Godzilla? This special issue also recaps a lot of Godzilla continuity and sets up a new forthcoming 12-part series.

Tarzan once granted special powers to a lion, an ape and a snake in order to make them fit rulers. But such power corrupts and the trio betray him in *Tarzan: Mugambi*, a 32-page one-shot by Darko Macan & Igor Kordej (who is painting the follow-up to



Marvels).

Visions: The Art of Arthur Suydam gathers together some of his best work from *Aliens* to whimsical children's stories from a career that spans over 20 years. The oversized 128-page volume is priced $29.95.

Mecha is a one-shot special featuring the Dark Horse Heroes character from Golden City in his first solo outing with art by Jim Hall & Tom Simmons.

DC

With most of the DC news elsewhere in these pages, a brief round-up of other stuff happening in DC's June shipping titles: Kieron Dwyer becomes the regular penciller of *Action Comics* with issue 712...Milestone's 'Long Hot Summer' runs through *Hardware #30, Icon #28, Xombi #15, Blood Syndicate #29, Shadow Cabinet #15, Kobalt #15* and *Static #26*...John Ridgway illustrates *The Invisibles #11*...'Year One' Annuals for *Justice League America, Wonder Woman, Deathstroke, Flash*...Roger Robinson & Jason Rodriguez art guest on *Flash #104*...Phil Gosier pencils *Steel #18*...Steve Pugh drawn *The Spectre #32*...Ted McKeever is the writer/artist for the 2-part 'Engines' beginning in *Legends of the Dark Knight #74*...

Image

Gen 13 #1 will have *thirteen* cover variants. This was not announced when the title was solicited. There are two covers (A and B) by J. Scott Campbell & Alex Garner which appear in equal quantities. In much lower quantities are the 11 other covers which have been provided by the likes of Art Adams, Simon Bisley, Michael Golden, Jason Pearson and others. "These days, gimmicks such as variant covers are viewed with some skepticism by the comic book marketplace, and *Gen 13* has taken the idea to new heights of excess" says Wildstorm Productions' Jeff Mariotte. Sadly, even if you collect all 13 covers you still won't have the lot as there's a chromium cover edition...

May is Wildstorm month for Jim Lee's studio, with an 11-part storyline running through the following titles: Prologue: *Team Seven: Objective Hell #1, parts 1-10: Wildstorm Rising Part 1, WildC.A.T.s #20, Union #4, Gen 13*

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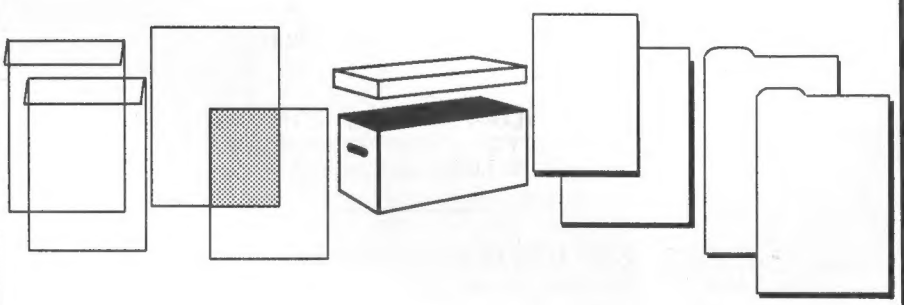

Just Comics

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#2, Grifter #1, Deathblow #16, Wetworks #8, Backlash #8, Stormwatch #22 and *Wildstorm Rising Part 10*. All have Barry Windsor-Smith covers. And if you're not up to speed on the Wildstorm front, check out *Wildstorm Sourcebook* which has all the background you'll need.

Spawn #32, shipping in May, will have an 6-page prequel story to the forthcoming *Blood Feud*, the latest Violator mini-series by Alan Moore & Tony Daniel. Not a preview - a new story. That issue also reveals the Spawn's new costume. As an extra bonus, for every 25 copies ordered, retailers will receive a 16-page *Angela* comic book which leads into the next Angela mini-series.

Marc Silvestri is handing over the art chores of his *CyberForce* comic to penciller David Finch (who drew the *CyberForce Annual*). This will free his time to concentrate on the forthcoming CyberForce animated series currently in development with Fox, and a new comic book

project which he's keeping under wraps as yet.

Silvestri's *Weapon Zero* debuts in May written by Walt Simonson with art by Joe Benitez & Batt, starting at issue T-minus-4, which promises to re-write hundreds of millions of years of history as we know it.

Eric Larsen will be producing his own version of *Savage Dragon #13* in May. That issue was part of Image's X-month where artists swapped titles; Larsen has stated that he "hated Jim Lee's *Savage Dragon #13*," and intends to produce his own version which he will retro-date September 1994; he'll also use the opportunity to tidy up a couple of continuity omissions. #17 of *SD* also comes in two versions - one page being completely redrawn and another altered after complaints of bad taste from retailers and parents.

ShadowHawk comes to an end with #18 which will feature the death of its hero. No joke, says the advertising. No clones, either.

Kitchen Sink

Taboo returns in June, the first issue since 1992. The eighth volume unearths stories by P. Craig Russell, David Lloyd, Jeff Nicholson, Al Columbia, Rick Grimes and Greg Capullo. No word of 'Lost Girls', sadly. A final ninth volume will appear in the autumn.

Malibu

The *Elven #1 Foil Cover Edition* from Malibu was notable for the lack of foil anywhere on the book. But does that make it a standard comic or a collectable variant?

Marvel

Maximum Clonage

Marvels core Spider-Man titles have been taken over by the Spider-clone, following one of Marvel's most intriguing "Is he? Isn't he?" storylines. Following 'The Trial of Peter Parker', and the revelation of the true Peter, June sees the 6-part 'Maximum Clonage' begin with *Spider-Man: Maximum Clonage Alpha*, a 48-page, chromium cover special which reveals the Jackal's horrifying scheme and which Spidey jumps to his side. The storyline runs through *Web of Spider-Man #127* in which The Punisher comes gunning for Spider-Man, *Amazing Spider-Man #404*, in which Spider-Man and Scarlet Spider clash, *Spider-Man #61* - now there's an *army* of Spider-clones - and next month's *Spectacular Spider-Man #227*. The storyline wraps up in *Maximum Clonage Omega*.

The shocking past of Kaine and Ben (Scarlet Spider) Reily is explored in *Spider-Man: The Lost Years*, a Marvel Select format 3-parter by J.M. DeMatteis, John Romita Jr. & Klaus Janson. How does it lead to the events in the current storyline? There's more Clonage tie-in material in *The Jackal Files* a one-shot look at the baddy behind the Clone saga.

Confused by all this cloning around? Part of the story is being retold in *Spider-Man: Clone Genesis* which reprints the original clone storyline by Gerry Conway, Ross Andru & Mike Esposito from *Amazing Spider-Man #141-151*. And if you want more Scarlet Spider action the third episode of 'Planet of the Symbiotes' appears in the 64-page flip book *Venom Super-Size*

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OPENS MIDDAY

Special #1, with the added bonus of revelations about the origin of Venom

Ian Edginton takes over the writing chores of *Ravage 2099 #33*. It's Doom vs Ravage in a fight to the death. Who'll win, in this, the last issue of *Ravage 2099*? Send us an SAE and a fiver and we'll give you a clue.

The Marvel Alterniverse debuts with *Ruins*, a fully painted 2-parter by Warren Ellis and Cliff & Terese Neilsen which presents photographer Phil Sheldon - from *Marvels* - with an uneasy feeling that the age of heroes has gone horribly wrong. Travelling the country he meets Rick Jones, a junkie who swears that Dr Bruce Banner, now a mass of cancerous green cells, is locked away in a vault beneath the great lakes; ex-astronaut Ben Grimm,

who wishes he'd piloted the deadly test flight taken by Victor Von Doom; the elusive President X, photographed in the grounds of the Westchester White House with a mysterious winged figure; and Peter Parker, a mass killer who infected his *Daily Bugle* colleagues with a raging radioactive virus... The first issue ships on June 20. Warren is also the guest writer of *Daredevil #343* out one week before which leads into next month's revamp for the character in the hands of J.M. DeMatteis & Ron Wagner.

Force Works #14 sows the seeds for a major shake-up due in August...*Incredible Hulk #432* is Peter David's 100th issue...Ian Churchill is the new penciller of *Cable* from issue #22...

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Tekno Comix

Neil Gaiman's Lady Justice #1 will now appear as two different editions with cover variations, one by Bill Sienkiewicz, one by Dan Brereton, rather than having a single 'flip-cover' edition. One is priced $1.95, the other $2.25.

Two other series debut in May: *Mickey Spillane's Mike Danger* and *John Jakes' Mullkon Empire*, the former a noir P.I. story set in the future, the latter a generation spanning family saga. The latter is written by Kate Worley with art by British artist John Watkiss.

Viz

Nausicaa of the Valley of the Winds Perfect Collection Vol. 1 brings together the first two volumes of Hayao Miyazaki's classic cautionary ecological tale in one 264-page paperback. Other newcomers to Viz in May include *Baoh Graphic Novel #1*, a chilling story of two young mutants rejected by society by Hirohiko Araki, and *X-1999 #1* the latest offering of the all-girl creative collective known as Clamp, the story of Kamui Shiro, a young man with psionic power who has to chose between two destinies.

BRITISH NEWS

Abiogenesis Press

Strangehaven is a new quarterly comic to be launched in June 1995 by newcomer Gary Spencer Millidge. The title refers to an enigmatic village situated on the edge of Dartmoor and its inhabitants' dark secrets. Millidge describes the series as "a surreal soap opera, with story arcs overlapping and intersecting, told in real time, flashback and dream sequences." *Strangehaven #1* will contain 32 story pages, priced £1.50. Distribution is by Diamond and Capital.

Bloomsbury Press

Bloomsbury are entering the burgeoning manga market with the release of *Ironfist Chinmi*, currently running to 28 volumes in Japan.

Chinmi is a young disciple sent to learn the ancient arts, and the series has been described by translator Jonathan Clements as "like a kung-fu Asterix set in ancient china - the fights are unbelievable." The first two volumes are released on July 2, with four more at least to follow, each weighing in at around 200 pages. The novel aspect to these editions is that they read from back to front, like the original Japanese volumes.

Fleetway

Britain's longest-running adventure comic character, Roy of the Rovers, roves no more. The recently published 19th issue of *Roy of the Rovers Monthly* was the last, and with the deal for Roy to appear in *Shoot!* having already come to an end Roy is homeless for the first time since he appeared on the front cover of *Tiger*'s first issue in October 1954.

Another UKCAC award contending line-up for the *Judge Dredd Megazine* begins with the conclusion of 'The Secret Life of Judge Pal' by Wagner & S.B. Davis, penultimate episodes of 'Maelstrom' (Robbie Morrison & Colin Macneil, who also provides the cover) and 'Anderson Psi: Something Wicked' by Grant & Charlie Gillespie, plus the continuing story of Pandora (Alexander & Hicklenton) and a one-shot 'Plagues of Necropolis' story by Si Spencer & Pete Venters. There's a unique opportunity to see the character designs for Maelstrom by both Chris Halls and Ted Naifeh, the American artist of Dark Horse's *Machine*. Issue 80 concludes Maelstrom and Anderson alongside the Dredd strip debut of *Megazine* readers' award artist Jason Brashill: 'Terror with Mrs Gunderson' - a 'Young Death' spin-off. S.B. Davis draws the 'Plagues of Necropolis' one-off and there's a competition to win copies of Mandarin's collected edition of *Anderson Psi: Childhood's End* by Alan Grant & Kev Walker.

The Complete Dredd #40 concludes 'City of the Damned' by too many people to list here. Frank Quitely supplies the cover.

Prog 937 of *2000AD* is a "beginnings and endings" ((c) Dave Bishop) issue with the last episodes of 'Crusade' and 'Finn', plus newcomers Rogue Trooper in 'Mind Bombs' by Steve White & Ed Perryman, 'Strontium Dogs' by Pete Hogan & Nigel Dobbyn, and the endless 'Harlem Heroes' by Michael Fleischer & Siku. Prog 938 begins Dredd's 'Escape from Kurt Russell Block' by Wagner & Paul Marshall, and there's a Future Shock. Prog 939 has a double dose of Kurt Russell to clear the decks for the all new Prog 940 which features the return of Johnny Kiss (in 'Goodnight Kiss' by Garth Ennis & Nick Percival), 'Stronts' (with art by Mark Harrison) and 'The Grudgefather'.

ICA

The Institute of Contemporary Arts is to publish their first ever comic title later this year. Created by Simon Grennan and Christopher Sperandio, the two have worked with prison inmates, senior citizens, and factory workers to bring together stories that they can convert into comic strips. The two are currently working on *Creative Accounting*, inviting ICA members to relate experiences, fact or fiction, bitchy or inspiring - the stories chosen will be under the full control of the story-teller who will be able to decide how they are represented and how their story looks. Their earlier title, *Prison Life* - three true-life tales from prison related and art-directed by ex-prison inmates - is to be published on June 1.

Manga

If you've spotted the soaring prices for *Topps X-Files #1* and fear you'll never see the story...fear not, because Manga Publishing launch a British edition on May 4. The title will include 25 pages of comic strip plus features on the making of the show, a programme guide, and interviews. The first issue includes a cover-mounted badge.

Tank Girl is launched on June 6 to co-incide with the release of the movie on June 16 as a 64-page monthly containing a full-length lead strip by Jamie Hewlett plus two back-up strips starring other characters from the series (Booga, Sub Girl, Jet Girl) and features to fill in the background for newcomers. You can get a free Tank Girl tattoo with the first issue.

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Titan

Two more of the massive Complete Judge Dredd volumes are due in May, *Judge Dredd in Oz* and *Judge Dredd & The Angel Gang* weighing in at 240 pages and 144 pages respectively. *Batman: Bloodstorm*, Doug Moench & Kelley Jones' follow-up to *Red Rain*, also gets a UK airing. As do *Beavis & Butthead* in their latest collection, *Holidazed and Confused* which reprints issues 9-12 of the US series.

For Trekkers, there are two collections: *Star Trek: Generation Beginnings* gathering up the first ST: TNG mini-series by Mike Carlin, Pablo Marcos, Carlos Garzo & Arne Starr, plus the UK edition of *Star Trek: The Ashes of Eden* co-written by William Shatner.

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Marvel

While most professionals were in Glasgow in March establishing an alibi, Marvel UK's offices were broken into. The thieves stole computer and design equipment, wreaking havoc with some titles which lost three weeks worth of work. Everything has subsequently been reworked and reproduced after a worrying couple of weeks.

Playback is a new magazine title covering classic and current British TV from action/detective shows to historical dramas and children's television. A Collectors Special goes on sale May 18, with a regular monthly run beginning in June 1995.

Strictly Comics

Strictly Comics Postal Auctions are holding an auction at Memorabilia '95 on Sunday, May 7, at 2pm. Lots on offer include golden and silver age comics, Dell/Gold Key, signed artwork, a set of 1960s Batman trading cards, and a Dalek! For more details contact Dave Wignall, 20A Plantaganet Road, New Barnet, Herts EN5 5JG, or telephone 0181 447 1855.

CCG

On March 30, 1995, a leading firm of Chartered Accountants, Casson Beckman, gave a presentation to the members of the Comics Creators Guild on the subject of 'Starting Up in Business'. The presentation was given by Geraint Howells, the partner leading Casson Beckman's entertainment and media division. He was assisted by Tax Manager Suresh Tolat, a keen comic collector himself. The presentation was received, and a number of those present commented that the talk drew their attention to practical planning aspects of starting in business that they had not considered before. For further information, Suresh Tolat can be contacted at Casson Beckman on 0171 387 2888.

Comic Workshop

Comics & Sequential Art is the title for a one-day workshop to be held by the Peterborough Science Fiction Writer Group on May 20 with Noel K. Hannan and Rik Rawling of Bad to the Bone Graphics (see last month's feature). The venue is the Peterborough Arts Centre, Orton Goldhay, and places are limited, so book early. Further information from Helen Gould, 28 Bathurst, Orton Goldhay, Peterborough, Cambridgeshire, PE2 5QH.

People and Publishing appears on page 57

"QUOTES"

"I'd like to thank myself for writing *The Tale of One Bad Rat...*" - Bryan Talbot struggles to extend his UK Comic Art Award acceptance speech in Glasgow, March 19 1995.

Overheard at the convention from someone desperate for the right chat up line: "Oh, I've got an arts background myself - my father went to arts college."

"You know that last issues attract more fans than normal, so order accordingly." *Mega Marvel*, June 1995. Hyping to the bitter end.

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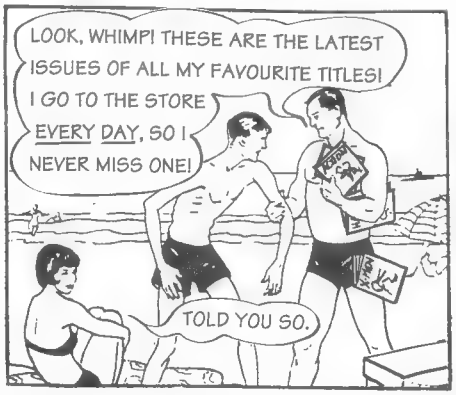

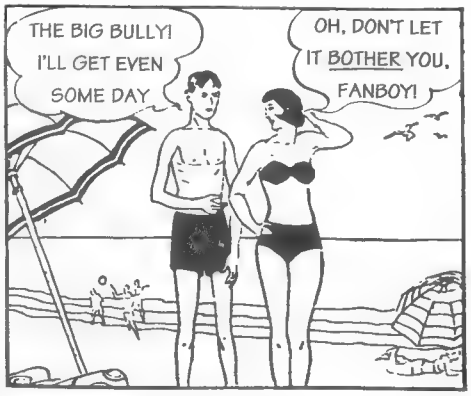

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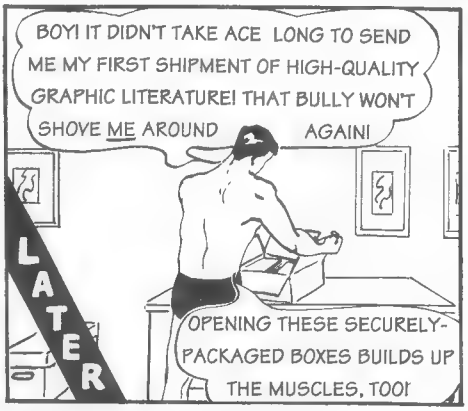
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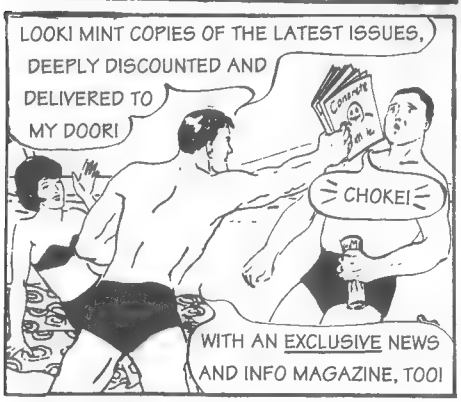
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COMIC WORLD AWARDS '95

An expectant hush descends across the land on a cold night in late March as the last votes for the Comic World Readers' Awards for 1995 are counted, a hush so quiet David Letterman could have just cracked a joke. The curtains sweep back (the nice ones that match the wallpaper) and a spotlight picks out the lone figure on stage. "Ladieees and Gentlemen - the Comic World Awards," announces the lone figure, pint in hand. "Sponsored by lager brewers around the world." He leaves for the bar.

The Comic World Awards are the only UK awards where fans are eligible to vote. Voting this year was noticeably slower than last year, although a rush towards the closing date added a touch of excitement to what was looking to be a repeat performance from our 1994 winners. So, without further ado, we'll be back after this short break.

For **Best Ongoing Title** it was pretty much a three-way battle between *Sandman*, *Shade the Changing Man* and *Cerebus the Aardvark*, man, with *Shade* looking a distinct contender for poll position until the very end. For the third year running, the Award goes to **Sandman** by Neil Gaiman and various artists. Unfortunately, as so often happens at these events, Neil was on tour and unable to accept his award, which was picked up by his answerphone who said, "Hi, this is Neil. I'm not here."

Gaiman almost made it an immediate double as Mr Punch soared ahead in the early voting for **Best One-Shot or Graphic Novel**, only to be pipped at the post by **Marvels** by Kurt Busiek and Alex Ross.

Moving swiftly on...the **Best Limited Series** Award goes to Bryan Talbot's **The Tale of One Bad Rat**, an immediate winner with fans who were voting on one, or at best two issues worth. On hearing of the award, a delighted Bryan Talbot said, "It's excellent news: many thanks to readers for voting. The early issues sold out quickly because retailers weren't really sure what to expect. But, if you haven't seen it, the collection will be out later this year."

Best Story was one of the categories where the votes were spread thinnest over a large number of titles. One Bad Rat again made a good showing, but this time came a close second to **Shade the Changing Man's** "A Season In Hell" by writer Pete Milligan and artists Chris Bachalo, Rick Bryant, Glynn Dillon, Philip Bond and Mark Buckingham from issues 45 to 50.

The groundswell of good talent and some excellent writers back on regular titles - Frank Miller on *Sin City*, James Robinson on *Starman* and *WildC.A.T.s*, Alan Moore on *Violator* and *From Hell*, John Wagner back on *Judge Dredd* on a regular basis - meant that the **Best Writer** category was hotly contested. However, it again became a two-horse race between Neil Gaiman and Pete Milligan, almost neck-to-neck on the finishing line...Milligan losing out by a hair. His second award this year, and for the third year in succession: **Forrest Gaiman**...er...**Neil Gaiman**. Neil's answerphone was in raptures. "Please leave a message after the beep," it said.

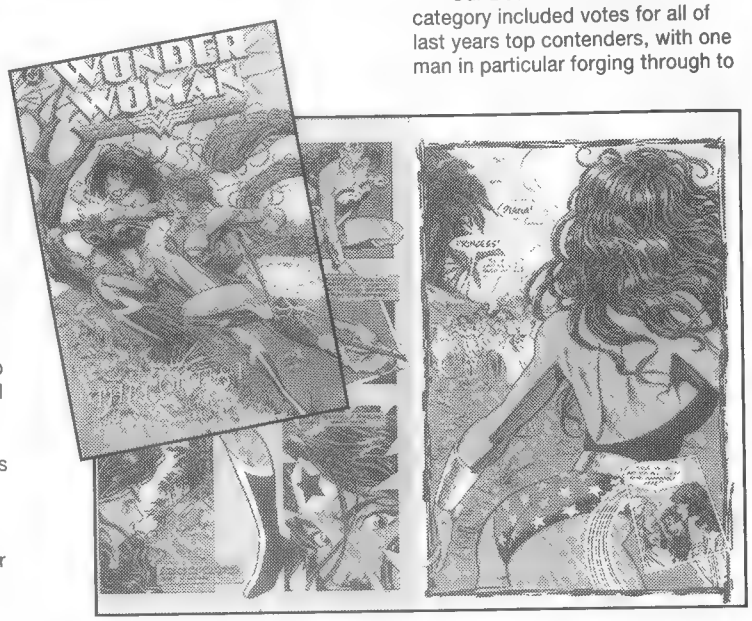
The Best Penciller and **Best Inker** categories had two runaway winners for the second year in succession, respectively **Chris Bachalo** and **Mark Buckingham.** "I'm stunned, shocked, amazed and gloriously happy," said a stunned, shocked, etc. Mark Buckingham, adding confidently, "I'll think of something clever to say later. No, I really am dead chuffed. So do I get an award this year or not? A statue would be nice..."

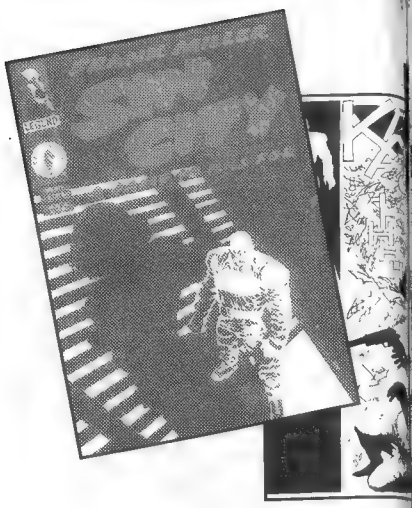
Our **Best Penciller/Inker** category included votes for all of last years top contenders, with one man in particular forging through to snatch the award from last year's winner, Glenn Fabry. That man was **Alex Ross**, whose startling retelling of the history of the Marvel Universe had been a runner up in last years Best Limited Series and Best Story categories, this year already picking up the Best One Shot, making Ross our second double winner.

Best Writer/Artist was, again, a closely fought battle between Bryan Talbot, John Byrne and Frank Miller, with the last few casting votes pushing the award across the Atlantic to.....(more dots for more tension!)...**Frank Miller** for the second year in succession. We phoned up Steve Noble for his comments, but he was in America.

The next three categories are traditionally awarded to Steve Oliff, Todd Klein and Karen Berger. Imagine our shock when the final tally was counted and one of them fell by the wayside this year. The award for **Best Colourist** - from now on to be Best Colorist in view of who wins every year: **Steve Oliff; Best Letterer: Todd Klein**, and **Best Editor**...well, with the votes for Vertigo split this year amongst Karen, Stuart Moore, Art Young, the name out of this years envelope was last years "close but no cigar" runner-up, **David Bishop** of the *Judge Dredd Megazine*.

More hotly contested awards go to the winners of the **Most**





--OR, MEBBE IT'S JUST A HERD OF WHALES!
IF ONLY WE COULD BE THAT LUCKY!
ALARM
IF THE VIBRO-ALARM SOUNDS, IT MEANS A FLEET OF WARSHIPS!
AND IF THAT'S THE CASE--WE'RE IN FOR--
WAR!

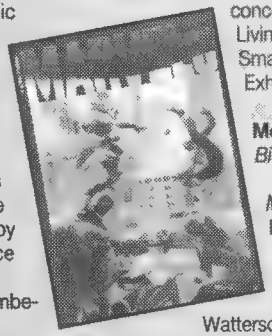
Promising New Title and **Most Promising Newcomer** for the year. As usual, both section had a vast number of nominations and a degree of common sense had to be applied in that some "newcomers" have actually been around for a while, but only recently come to public attention. Not such a problem for the former category where the winner was **The Invisibles** by Grant Morrison and, initially, Steve Yeowell. Grant's reaction to the award will be made public next issue. The Most Promising Newcomer Award goes to **Mike Deodato Jr**. whose work has come to the fore since taking over DC's *Wonder Woman* and whose current assignments include *The Avengers* and *Turok, Dinosaur Hunter*.

Our awards draw to a close with one final award to be made. This is the first year we've run a **Special Award** category, and it was interesting to discover the variety of nominees from numerous top rated names on the creative side to editors, to publishers and to what can only be described as the support staff of the industry - retailers, trade journalists, and a large etcetera. One winner stood head and shoulders above all others: **Jack Kirby.** We called Warren Ellis for his reaction to the award. Then we thought better of it and hung up.

Congratulations to all the winners. Commiserations to the runners-up. Thanks to everybody who voted. The curtains close.

CSG AWARDS

Other awards not-so-recently bestowed, were the Comic Creators Guild Awards, presented on December 14, 1994. The latter awards are selected by an Awards Committee from nominations received from the Guild's general membership. The Awards were presented by Guild Treasurer Nick Vince and Awards Committee Chairman Lee Brimmicombe-Wood.



Frank Bellamy Lifetime Achievement Award: Alex Toth

Special Award (for doing most to improve the public's conception of comics): "The Living Room" Brighton Small Press Comics Exhibit.

Best Ongoing (Non-Monthly) Title: *Naughty Bits*, by Roberta Gregory

Best Cover: *Marvels #1*, by Alex Ross

Best Newspaper Strip: 'Calvin & Hobbes', by Bill Watterson

Best Monthly Title: *Ranma 1/2*, by Rumiko Takahashi

Best Humour Strip: *Bone*, by Jeff Smith

Best Strip in a Periodical: 'Life, the Universe, and (Almost) Everything', by Kate Charlesworth in *The New Scientist*

Best One-Shot: *Batman Adventures: Mad Love*

Best Limited Series/Story Arc: *The Tale of One Bad Rat*, by Bryan Talbot

Best Anthology: *Sputnik*, by Blackeye Press

Best Small Press/Self-Published Title: *Tales from Sleaze Castle*, by Terry Wiley & Dave McKinnon

Foreign Work Most Worthy of Translation into English: *Reflexerier* (Scandanavia).

UK COMIC ART AWARDS

The Sixth annual UK Comic Art Awards were announced during the course of the Glasgow Comic Art Convention by organiser Frank Plowright.

Best Writer: Peter Milligan

Best Artist: Alex Ross

Best Writer/Artist: Frank Miller

Best Auxilliary Contributor: Ellie de Ville

Best Newcomer: Trevor Hairsine

Best Publisher: DC Comics

Best Graphic Novel or One-Shot: *Face*, by Peter Milligan & Duncan Fegredo

Best Book Collection: *Marvels*, by Kurt Busiek & Alex Ross

Best Ongoing Publication: *Judge Dredd Megazine*

Best New Publication: *The Tale of One Bad Rat*, by Bryan Talbot

Special Career Achievement Award: Frank Miller

The Auction, to raise money to put graphic novels onto the shelves of Glasgow's libraries, raised a more than creditable £1,381. A lot of graphic novels.

This year's Glasgow Con was the last to be held. Following this Autumn's UK Comic Art Convention in London, UKCAC will be held in the Spring of 1996. The atmosphere at Glasgow, relaxed and friendly, will be sorely missed.

Organiser Frank Plowright flexes his pecs.

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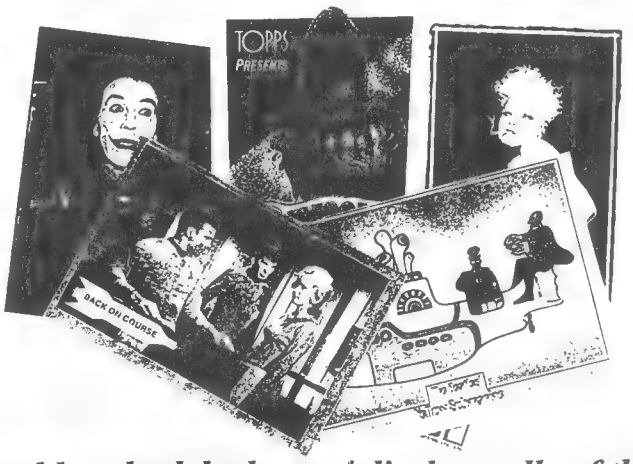

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Smoke damage

I am returned...

There was no water at all at Glen Cove, Long Island. In there wasn't *anything*. The food was rotten, the staff were almost without exception quite frighteningly stupid, the rooms were horrible the bar was mostly shut, the coffee was nasty, and I'm never going back.

Good points were few and far between during my nine days in America for the two Marvel conferences, and mostly concentrated in the couple of days I spent on Manhattan between conferences. Although I did get to meet and drink with Larry Hama, who knows more incredibly funny and horribly violent stories than probably anyone else of my acquaintance. And I did meet Peter David again, who was unfailingly pleasant, amusing and supportive the whole time. Isn't that strange?

Do you know, people are still talking about the now legendary Jack Kirby column?

Marie Javins inserted a piece onto the text page of *Druid #1* telling people to get over it and move on - apparently it's still a subject of discussion on this new-fangled Net thingy. And Steve tells me that people are still writing into the *Jack Kirby Quarterly* about it. The heart of the matter, as Arthur Ranson unfortunately discovered some months ago, is that some folk still can't get past that first line. That first line is clearly described in the paragraph that follows it, as an attention-grabber. The meat of the argument has nothing to do with that line. For those of you *still* screaming about it, go and get a sense of humour. Rent one if necessary. Selah.

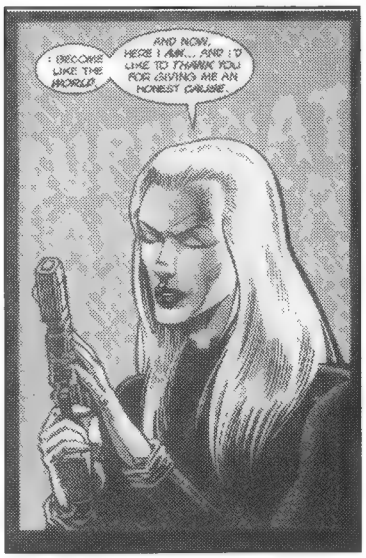
Meanwhile, I am preparing the Windsor McKay Was A Wanker and the Alan Moore He's A Git, He Is columns. Possibly to be followed up by a Buddah Is A Fat Bastard number.

See that interview piece with me last issue? That was a bit of a shock. I'd been asked to talk to Tim Pilcher, late of Vertigo UK, about the stuff happening on *Doom 2099*, because, in all honesty, Steve was missing a page due to being let down on an article. I'd been given the impression that it was to be an expanded news piece, filling one page - not really an interview feature at all. The Doom stuff needed publicising, so, what the hell, I thought - wouldn't hurt to help Steve with a half-hour of my time. Three weeks later, I receive my comp. copy of *Comic World* and bugger me if it isn't an interview feature. With my horribly vague, early-morning jabbering transcribed *verbatim*, nary a thought paid to how little command of English I have before 5pm.

Further, I need to apologise here to Joel from *TripWire* who I refused an interview to on the grounds that I really wasn't intending to do any interviews until later on in the year. I'm on a promise to talk to *Hero* in the Spring, but, presently, I'm only really doing news pieces - on the sound policy that people will easily get sick of the sight of my name otherwise. If they haven't already.

Funny how everyone's running around screaming about Marvel buying Heroes World in order to distribute themselves exclusively. Only in comics could people get hysterical about an everyday business move. Perhaps it needs reiterating that Marvel Entertainment owner Ronald Perelman is a *businessman*. The man from Revlon, he say Buy. He is putting together a portfolio of companies to strengthen his pre-existing purchases and create assets for further purchases. It's possible he still has a deficit on his accounts - a few years back, it was suggested that he owed a vast amount of money to certain parties following his purchase of Marvel. His purchases are not restricted to Marvel. He bought a cigar manufacturer the other month, for Christ's sake. A good, solid, stable business - an excellent asset with a clean spreadsheet. He can use its stable turnover to balance his accounts, or he can put it up as a fine asset to borrow against.

Perelman is picking up companies like this, I think, to bolster his ongoing transformation of Marvel into a multimedia 'giant'. It shouldn't be forgotten that Perelman still owns New World Pictures. In this instance, the Heroes World thing makes perfect sense. In the record industry, CBS-Sony



Records distribute CBS-Sony records. Why let those little bastards at EMI clip some pennies out of their money? Or worse, some bunch of waterheads running their own distribution company in Dogshit, Nebraska? Hell, no, we'll distribute our stuff ourselves and get *all* the cash. Sound business sense, surely? Not to the waterheads in Dogshit, Nebraska, who made an absolute mint out of distributing the 'product' - an, in at least one instance, shat in their own dinner by telling the companies what kind of 'product' they should be putting out (if DC go exclusive too, wait and see which distributor they hook up with). No, they helped the company become rich and successful as they are, so they should stay and give up this self-distribution pipedream. It's not *fair* otherwise.

Welcome to the real world, shiteyes.

Do I have sympathy for distributors? Well, not much. Certain distributors have always given the independent sector of the industry a hard time. Certain distributors have a history of at least attempting to bully small publishers. Hopefully, this whole business will make them see that they should be nurturing the independents. Let's not be silly - the goal of these people is to make money. They need to wake up to the fact that, with help, the indies can make money for them too. Without that help, the indies could easily vanish. And if they vanish, certain distributors will not be long in following.

Please realise that, in the above, I am not saying that Marvel going solo-exclusive is a good thing, or a bad thing. It is simply an inevitable thing. Get over it. CW

WARREN ELLIS is currently being published in Druid, Excalibur and Doom 2099 and waiting on printing of Thor, Starjammers, Dr Strange, Silence, Ruins...but he didn't write them all at once. Well, could you?

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Now or Never

Stephen L. Holland
Page 45, Nottingham

The time has come to talk candidly and constructively about the future of the Comic Book Industry.

The time has come to talk about markets, diversity, quality and growth.

At this point of uneasy flux, where huge changes occur daily in the very structure of the industry, and a single line of optimism comes qualified with three paragraphs of doubt, we hope that now, finally, ears that have so far been deaf to opportunity will listen to what we have to say, and the evidence we now have to support our beliefs.

In October 1994, following our organisation of the record-breaking Cerebus UK Tour '93, Mark Simpson and I opened Page 45, a shop which reflects our belief that quality and diversity, when managed with professionalism, business (common) sense and imaginative marketing, is the future of the Industry.

Given the condition of the market, this venture required careful, reasoned planning. This planning, in the form of a 90 page document (or manifesto), which objectively assessed the state of the comic book industry from a cold economic viewpoint, earned us the personal endorsement of David Williams, the Senior Vice President of Pizza Hut International, a professional working in an international company not known for economic folly.

This, as succinctly as possible, is the reasoning behind Page 45's purpose, strategy, and initial success:

The Comic Book Industry is an infant industry based on a fledgeling medium. Its potential is vast as any other entertainment industry, for in theory thee medium is like any other; just as there are books, films and music to suit all tastes, so there is a comic book for everyone.

These comics exist now, have existed for years, and are currently multiplying every month in wider and wider varieties, but they have not been reaching their potential readers. Instead, for over two decades, we have allowed ourselves to be side-tracked to a single genre of limited appeal, which is why the percentage of the American and UK population currently reading comics is still so pathetically tiny.

This is not an inherent weakness in the medium, but a culpable weakness in our industry, which, in its apathy, timidity, and its total failure to grasp basic principals of market economics, has so far failed to transform a sub-culture into a thriving, universally enjoyed medium.

No Industry can survive - much less thrive - on one small genre medium. Its market is consequently narrow, precluding any possibility of *real* growth, and it leaves us vulnerable to the inevitable crash that comes to any genre in any medium (for example, the Western film).

Different audiences enjoy different films, and different ears enjoy different music. Those industries cater for this demand by publishing, marketing and selling such a variety of material that almost everyone in the modern world buys records, visits the cinema, and reads books. But almost *no-one* buys a comic, because this industry caters for no-one but that tiny, tiny percentage of the population who would ever contemplate reading about superheroes.

The equivalent would be if the Music Industry sold nothing but Rap. Can you imagine that? Certainly those who enjoy Rap would be buying the stuff, but no-one else would be buying any music at all. That would starve the music industry of billions of the dollars they currently enjoy, and which we in the comic book industry are losing out on every year.

We have wasted away our resources for far too long and allowed the public's perception of comics to be narrowed into a ghetto market marked 'Superheroes', 'Kid's stuff' and 'Junk Bond Paradise'. This is what the public believe, this is now what the press believe, and it is our own fault, because - heaven help us - this is what we inside the industry have deceived ourselves into believing, that the terms 'comics' comes prefixed with a silent 'superhero', and we have traded upon this self-imposed limitation for far too long, exploiting this last vestige of a saturated market base until all we have left are faltering sales from a tired old genre.

This is the reason why the comic book market imploded so dramatically (sorry *superhero* comic book market - there has been no such decline in demand for comics like *Love and Rockets, Cerebus, Bone, Strangers In Paradise, One Bad Rat, Naughty Bits* and *Hate* - quite the reverse, which should tell you *something);* this is the reason why comic shops are raided, whilst bookshops are free to stock material by the Marquis de Sade; and this is the reason why Page 45 has to fight tooth and nail to *give* distributors our money, in exchange for delivering the diversity of material we now sell to our ever-expanding audience of women, graduates, business men, business women, music lovers, art lovers, prose readers, film go-ers, parents, grand-parents...in short, to the 99.9% of the population who until now had never bought a comic book in their life for the simple reason that they had never seen one - or even heard of one - they might enjoy.

Now, no-one can pretend with the best will in the world that a transformation could be executed overnight. The public's perception of comics has been limited, and it will take time to undo the damage we have wrought. But if the end goal is the patronisation of 100% of the population, the custom, the spending power of - god knows - 10,000 times more people than currently visit our stores, then don't you think it is well past time we made a start?

Some retailers have made a start, preceding us in the realisation that a change can be affected from ground level. Other can make a start by replacing the superhero posters in their shop fronts (everyone knows that a comic shop sells superheroes) with displays more attractive to new target audiences, by building a demand for the real mainstream material to those who then come in to browse, and by insisting that their distributors maintain a regular supply of this material as its audience grows. These retailers will sell just as many superheroes as ever (we do), but make additional profits on additional material.

Similarly, distributors, who have the power to assist both sides (the publisher and the retailer), can make a start by giving over the covers of some of their catalogues to material other than superheroes (I hesitate to use the word 'alternative' because this material is only an alternative to superheroes - it's actually far more mainstream) and actively encouraging this shift, so eliminating the mixed signals they're sending to the retailers.

More importantly, they can overhaul their ordering processes to cater for demand on reorders of titles which often start small but grow once established, and encourage new publishers to supply them with a wider range of comic book material targeted towards other demographic groups.

Larger publishers who continue to bombard the public with deeply unhelpful publicity about superheroes I have no time for; this reinforces general prejudice, and does more harm than good. However, publishers of quality material can get together with distributors and sympathetic retailers to push their material to target audiences outside the current comicbook market (two cheers for DC and its outreach programme, because it included *Hellblazer* and *Sandman,* both literate books - we'd welcome that in England - minus one cheer for including superheroes, thereby associating the two and diminishing the impact). They an also follow Dark Horse's lead by publishing a diversity of material, some of spectacular quality and mass appeal.

Then more creators and self-publishers can finally come out with the stuff they've always wanted to, but which they have been previously discouraged from attempting, because they've been told there's no point. We now know there is a point - just look at *Bone* and *Strangers In Paradise*.

Now the vicious circle has turned into a positive cycle and everyone's making money.

Can't be done? It *has* been done!

Here at Page 45 we're not waiting for others to do the work for us - we've made our own start, dealing with the perceived market. But in just six months of operation, the progress we've made proves that this strategy really does work.

For this month, *excluding* back issues, for every 1 copy of Batman we've sold:

10 *Cerebus World Tour* Book
4.5 *Sandman*
4 *Hellblazer*
4 *Bone*
4 *Cerebus*
3 *Naughty Bits*
3 *Hate*
2 *Strangers In Paradise*
2 *THB*
2 *Jim*

We now await reorders; if our distributors can deliver, we expect these figures to grow.

But it doesn't even have to take six months for the sales to pick up. By simply offering these titles in the first place we sold 40 *Cerebus* books, 23 *Sandman* books, 19 *Bone* books, 12 *Concrete* books...and these are *books.* We sold more *Cerebus* books than all the other superhero reprint volumes put together.

Coming back to my point about reorders, during our first month our customers chose to buy 92 *Uncanny X-Men*. This includes current and back-issues (of which there are 325 to choose from).

As for *Naughty Bits* - that title by Roberta Gregory involving a woman, just trying to get through her *life,* working in an *office,* trying to buy *groceries,* find sex, free space, and her next tampon - we sold: 61 copies in week 1, 33 copies week 2, 39 copies week 3, 37 copies week 4 and 48 copies week 5.

That's a lot of *Naughty Bits* in a month, and there's only 14 to choose from. Per month, rather than per issue, that makes it our highest selling comic.

Quite simply, books like *Naughty Bits, Bone* and *Strangers in Paradise* have a far broader appeal than any superhero title could ever have, because they play to a much wider range of demographic groups. They just need the correct exposure in the right environment.

So what's the correct environment?

Firstly, we chose a location just off the city centre, between music shops, on the way to the Theatre, Universities, and a well-known nightclub/gig venue. In other words on a route regularly used by our primary target audience.

Secondly, the shop itself is designed to lure in precisely those people who don't normally visit a comic shop - women, families, businessmen - and keep them in. As I mentioned earlier, the superhero crowd has found us anyway, so we went for the more subtle approach with a name and logo which whilst catchy and allusive, avoids alerting the general public's stigmatic preconceptions as to what they might find inside ('content neutral, style positive,' as Scott McCloud said). Similarly, the window displays are theatrical but uncluttered.

Thirdly, we treat this shop as a bookshop, where a walk-in customer can find the book they want when they want it. That mean giving over priorities from back-issues (oh, yes, we have those - but in moderation for we order to sell through - et apart ad upright as in a bookcase) to reprint volumes and graphic novels. These are so important for the customer who is unused to monthly comics, and who want something complete to read without having to chase up old editions. These we manage with weekly stock checks and reorder accordingly, keeping availability high and cash-flow flowing.

Fourthly, we *care* about our comics. We love the medium and it shows. Rather than hire others, we work on the shop floor, greet our customers, and take time to introduce them to the variety of material we offer. We understand the newcomer's curiosity and confusion, but are secure in the knowledge that whoever walks in through the door can be helped to find something to suit their other interests.

So, this is the result: a thriving business in a supposedly ailing industry, expanding as rapidly as our market base, frequented by as many demographic groups as you could imagine.

However - and this is the bite - we have done so with the minimum help from our distributors, who as individual sales people have probably tried, but are themselves hampered by an archaic system which still caters almost exclusively for the past.

For example, we've tried to order *Concrete* books, *Why I Hate Saturn* books, *Baker Street* books, in quantities of between 10 and 15. We've placed reorders for *THB, Strangers in Paradise* and *Thieves & Kings* - up to 50 for each of these (we were told that the minimum order for *Thieves & Kings* was 25, but it's actually 1, and this discrepancy is symptomatic of the apathy ad reluctance to order these comics).

We've even write to publishers to ensure their availability. Lou Bank at Dark Horse says they'd fill a single order for a *Concrete* book. M'Oak says Diamond have been ordering *Thieves & Kings* steadily.

Even our distributor lists them (more than a month after our order was placed in the case of *Thieves & Kings*) as available for reorder. But we've yet to receive, for example, any *Thieves & Kings* reorders at all.

Someone, somewhere, is being deeply unhelpful, and I expect any day now, to be told that much of this was in print weeks after we ordered it, is now out of print.

Our orders to Fantagraphics, Drawn & Quarterly, and other publishers average some £1,000 per month. The reorders for other comics and books we'd like to purchase - from *Desert Peach* to *Baker Street* - would come to some £1,500 per month. And we would gladly, joyously give a distributor who supplied them to us a extra £2,500 per month. But it seems we cannot *give* this money away.

We've gone and done it anyway, incurring extra costs through ordering direct where possible (in Britain we don't have the luxury of the 40 and 5 programme instigated by Sim and Sweet, though all power to them) and it has still paid off. We're simply not prepared to be dissuaded by these obstacles.

The point is, however, that they needn't be there, they shouldn't be there, and they better not be there much longer, because whether or not the leaked 'confirmation' that Marvel intend to transform Heroes World into an exclusive distribution network for their own publications is true, distributors can no longer rely on the superhero genre to line their pockets and guarantee our custom. They will need to prove to us they can supply us with other services and other material.

Celebrate Diversity was a laudable idea - a touch timid, but a real step in the right direction. Unfortunately, it was never backed up, and has since left in our mouths the rank taste of lip-service, for it has come and gone and the books are simply no longer available to us.

So, we can carry on with the few other professional retailers and the quality self-publishers, expanding the market base in individual cities, catering for mail order and thriving as we do.

But how much more positive, how much more constructive, how much more successful it would be if we co-operated to expand our market base by promoting a diverse selection of quality material in a professional environment and in an imaginative co-operative public campaign, whilst ensuring this material's availability in the stores themselves.

The future is here. It's a glorious opportunity. CW

I wasn't sure whether we should run such a long letter on these pages, but many of the comments seem timely, as much of this issue's news relates to distributors and their practises. Personally, I've always imagined I enjoyed a diverse range of comic - but visiting different shops I'm still constantly surprised how wide a range there is to stock. I think the basic question here is: is diversity the future of comics? Do shops need to evolve or risk death from a stagnating superhero market? Let's have your thoughts. Letters should be addressed to Comic World Letters, Castle House, 97 High Street, Colchester, Essex CO1 1TH.

THE COMICS WAREHOUSE

PO BOX 333 (39), GALLIFORD ROAD, MALDON, ESSEX CM9 4XD

THE CLEARANCE CENTRE FOR PUBLISHER'S OVERSTOCKS AND REMAINDERS

Mail Order CoB RA Protection

Hi, last month due to total time pressure, The Comics Warehouse advertisement dropped back to a single page.

This month, as things get back to normal here we are again, back for your edification and delight, published by the delightful EMMA, doyen and guru of the Comic World Advertisement Section. Back with a bang. Four solid pages of absolute bargains for your reading pleasure.

As publishers keep publishing, we'll keep bringing you not only the best recreational reading in the world but the best possible prices too.

Check out our packs and specials, wander through these four pages of small closely packed yet reader friendly type. There's a huge gusher of goodies in our stock holding of well over half a million comics and magazines, including many many new titles like the hugely popular Warrior Nun Areala. Ben, that's Ben Dunn publisher of the imprint Antarctic Press, has gone back to do a second printing and has a trade paperback in the works, as well.

Azrael, Babylon 5, Casey Jones & Raphael, the list grows and grows. Add to that the tried and true titles like Superman, Batman, Spiderman and the X-Men and you can see why The Comics Warehouse back issues list is one of the best in the World. Join us in our celebration of comic book diversity. From Hero to Zero, from crime to carnality, from the weird to the wonderful. Wander through our caves of creativity, check out the pages of print, we look forward to hearing from you soon.

Please remember that all our advertisements are completely self-contained and cannot be mixed or matched with any other advertisement or offer. The prices in this advertisement are valid from publication until June 11th 1995 only. All prices are per copy except "set" or "pack" prices which are for single sets as advertised, and remember that when ordering "mature" titles such as "Vertigo" tee must have your honest signed statement that you are in excess of sixteen years.

Representing "Your Right to Read" - We believe you have the right to be able to afford and enjoy comics

The minimum order is just £5.00 with a flat fee of £3.00 for delivery mainland UK: ,whatever the size of the order. See the last page of our advertisement for ordering instructions.

Please note: to improve despatch we print our computer codes used for each title (eg DC71 = Batman: M300 = Uncanny X-Men). It would be extremely helpful to us if you would give the relevant computer code with your order, whether verbally with telephone orders or when listing written orders.

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707-708.....£0.60
685 (Doomsday) £0.70
700 g/s The Fall of Metropolis £0.95

DC2D :ACTION COMICS No 687 (Introducing the Reign of the Supermen) Special edition with Die Cut Cover £0.70

DC2E:ACTION COMICS 695: Embossed cover version £0.75

DC4: ACTION ANNUALS 4 (Eclipso), ...£0.40
5 (Bloodlines).....£0.40
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DC21: ADVENTURES OF SUPERMAN 440-442,473, 474,477-496, (496 has a Doomsday cameo), 499-520.....£0.40
521,522.....£0.60

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DC24: ADVENTURES OF SUPERMAN Annuals 3 Armageddon 2000, 4 Eclipso, 5 Bloodlines...£0.50
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517,518.. .....£0.90

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DC248: ECLIPSO 1-18 .....£0.35

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STRANGERS IN A STRANGE LAND

Chris Claremont and Dwayne Turner introduce Sovereign Seven to Jeffery Lang

They are refugees. Tempest-tossed on waves of time and space, they are the last survivors of a terrifying cataclysm. Someday, they may think of themselves as a team, perhaps even a family, but for now they're only immigrants cast on the shores of a strange new world-the DC Universe.

They're the *Sovereign Seven*, heroes taking on a world they've never known, people they've never met, and forces they've only dreamed.

In May 1995, DC Comics premieres the first issue of *Sovereign Seven*, a monthly ongoing series created by stellar writer Chris Claremont, with groundbreaking artwork by Dwayne Turner. This launch is an event Claremont's fans have been eagerly awaiting since he left Marvel's Uncanny X-Men, but the writer himself has a somewhat more composed reaction to his new creation.

"It's a pain in the neck," Claremont says dryly. Then, laughing, he continues, "A monthly title is good for a writer's discipline, but having goofed off for three years, it's a lot like getting back on a bicycle and finding, boy, those hills are a lot bigger than you remember."

Sovereign Seven is the story of a group of extraordinary individuals brought together by an interdimensional incident that decimated almost all levels of existence. Each of the Seven was a person of consequence on his home world, heir to a ruling family, wealth, status and power. All that is gone.

Rampart

The Seven are: Cascade, who can "pour" through time and space; Network, a powerful telepath; Reflex, a master of absolute speed; Rampart, the bulwark of the team, a gentle man of great power; Finale, whose great beauty is her weapon; Indigo, a master of stealth and disguise; and Cruiser, wielder of telekinesis, a pure unstoppable force whose power, simply, is to hit things hard and knock them down.

The series opens with a bang as the Seven explode into the DC Universe just in time to prevent the murder of a young man at the hands of two large, ugly creatures called Warboys. This fight leads to their first encounter with an established DC Universe character, quite possibly the last DC Universe character anyone would ever want to meet...Darkseid!

There's action, drama, sharply defined characters, witty dialogue, and the astonishing art of Dwayne (*Stormwatch, Wolverine*) Turner - and all this in just the first issue! Fan-favourite penciller and inker Jerome K. Moore signs on as inker with issue #2. "The wonderful thing about a first issue is that you have the luxury of time," Claremont reflects. "The problem with the second issue is that it's due three-and-a-half weeks later...then another three-and-a-half weeks later....That's the challenge, the responsibility, that the creative team has, as well as the hardest nut to crack for anyone in this business: not just coming up with an idea, but coming up with another one every three weeks, and on and on and on."

"But," notes his editor Rob Simpson, "Chris has the experience and the drive to come up with what seems to be an infinite number of ideas and interweave them into the series."

As to the origins of the concept, Claremont explains, "*Sovereign* is the latest stop on a culminating series of themes I've been working on my whole career: friendship, loyalty, family, growing up. The book is a logical progression from what I've been doing over the years. It's a group book because I like groups of people. Groups give you a lot more opportunities for stories, for character interaction. Everyone has someone to talk to. In part, it grows out of ideas that I might have used in X-Men or that canon - concepts, characters, a whole host of things that I took with me when I left that have percolated and evolved into something completely different, something my own."

Laughing, he explains, "The rule of thumb here is the same I used with X-Men: create characters who

STRANGERS IN A STRANGE LAND

the readers will like and empathize with and want to get to know, then put them through hell."

Claremont, Turner and Simpson hope Sovereign Seven will serve as a vehicle to rediscover the awe and mystery, the pleasant confusion, of a new universe - the DC Universe. "Part of the goal with the series is to avoid doing what has been the tendency with most publishers," Claremont remarks. "When you introduce a new character, they go down a receiving line of the established characters, the better to integrate them into the new universe. So, by the time you get to the third issue, everyone is friends; everyone has exchanged phone numbers; they've been out on dates and had sleepover parties. You lose a lot of the sense of wonder and it becomes a 'been there, done that' situation."

One story in development takes the Seven on a road trip to Gotham City. Claremont explains, "It has nothing to do with Batman or Robin or any of the Batman cast, except for the one seminal character of Gotham City. It's my way of answering the questions, 'What's it like to visit Gotham City? What's it like to drive into it from the 'burbs? What's it like to walk around? How does it feel to walk around?' Batman spends very little time down on the pavement. Not to say that it's going to be a *Baedeker's Guide to Gotham*, but this is an opportunity to see established settings and established characters both through my character's eyes and my own eyes as new, fresh places we've never been before and people we've never met."

Claremont is careful to emphasise that *Sovereign Seven* is a co-creation: "The thing about comics is that we're a visual medium, so no matter how brilliant the creative inspiration, a project's success depends on how successfully it's visually realized. Dwayne's work has been breathtaking. I remember looking at the early design work and then the first issue and thinking to myself, 'Huh? Whoa!' There's a growing wealth of physical characterization and storytelling ability that gets better every issue. Dwayne is everything any good writer looks for in a partner. I can't wait to see what the fans think."

Finale

Turner admits that even having done a team book for Image didn't completely prepare him for the level of detail in Claremont's scripts. "When I did *Stormwatch*, it was different because the emphasis was always on Battalion," Turner recalls. "Here, especially in the first couple of issues,

Cruiser

we're introducing all the characters and letting everyone get a look at them. That was a little bit of a shocker at first. Seven characters showing up in most of the panels takes time, but as we've gotten further into it, I've become more comfortable."

Turner continues, "I quickly realized that I had to be conscious of the staging because Chris writes these great mousetraps. The set-up is important because if one character does something, it sets off a chain-reaction that throws everything in motion. If you don't set it up so it visually makes sense, the reader doesn't get the idea of what's going on."

One of the most exciting features of *Sovereign Seven* won't be immediately apparent on the printed page - unless you're the sort of reader who scans the indicia. Rob Simpson explains:

"This is, essentially, the first time a major comic book company has done a creator-owned series that interacts with the rest of their characters. The universe in which the Sovereign Seven lives is the DC Universe, but the copyright and trademark to the series belongs to Chris Claremont. These characters are totally his - totally. This is a partnership is every sense of the word."

"It's not the first time this has ever happened," Claremont corrects, "but it's certainly the first since Wonder Woman back in the '40s. Yes, it's the first time DC has permitted a creator-owned book to be fully integrated into its super-hero universe. It shows DC's great faith in both me as a creator and, I think, in the evolution of the art form. That a creator and a publisher can sit down and work as partners, that we can approach a project from the perspective that we both have something significant to gain and lose, leads to a situation where we have a rough equivalence of risk and reward."

Dwayne Turner recalls a conversation he had with Todd McFarlane while *Sovereign Seven* was still evolving. "He said he thought he was working with the best letterer, the best colorist, all the best people in the business, and if he wasn't happy, it was his own fault. I feel the same way about *Sovereign Seven* - I won't have anyone else to blame if I don't want to draw these characters because I designed them and I believe I'm working with one of the best writers, the best letterers, the best colorists, some of the best people in the business. If I'm not happy, it's my own fault."

Are expectations for *Sovereign Seven* already running very high? Could this be the basis of the next Great Comic Book Franchise? Both Simpson and Claremont have very definite views on that point.

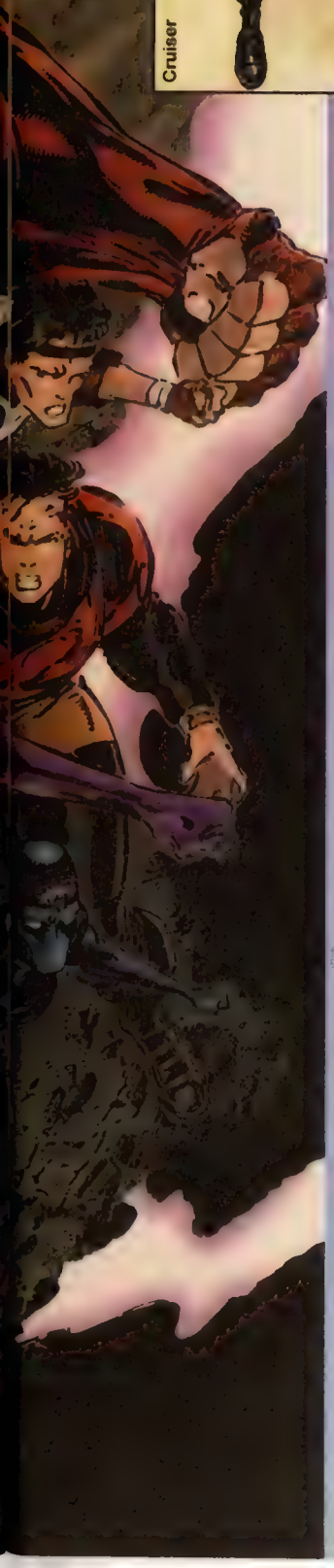
Simpson says, "Thinking about a franchise is really putting the cart before the horse. Our major concern has always been putting together a book that we're having fun working on and reading. We're paying attention to plot points - 'oh, let's remember to come back to this,' or 'let's give this character some time in the sun' - but we're not thinking, 'Let's figure out how to get this character into a continuing series or a miniseries.' If that happens down the line, we'll all be very happy - and we very much want this to be an important project that will change the shape of comics both storywise and business-wise - but, no, we're not thinking about spin offs. I think sometimes people are in too much of a hurry to spin things off. Characters need a strong foundation first."

Claremont adds, "Bear in mind that one of the significant advantages that John Byrne, Dave Cockrum and I had with X-Men was that there were no expect-ations. Survival was the success. We had a bimonthly mid-list title that a few people read, so we were allowed to experiment and grow and make mistakes in comparative anonymity. *Sovereign Seven* doesn't have that advantage. It's walking out the gate as a major launch. If we fall on our faces, it's going to be a big, big impact. If we succeed it's going to be a big, big impact, but everyone is going to be watching. That challenge only adds to our excitement."

He concludes, "The idea behind *Sovereign Seven* is to do an exciting, entertaining, high adventure, superhero comic with enough action and suspense to keep the reader on the edge of his or her proverbial seat, enough character to make them care about what's going on, some humour, but, above all, a sense of the unexpected. This is a book where you're never quite sure who's going to turn up on the next page." CW

Sovereign Seven © Chris Claremont & Dwayne Turner

"THIS IS THE FIRST TIME A MAJOR COMIC BOOK COMPANY HAS DONE A CREATOR-OWNED SERIES THAT INTERACTS WITH THE REST OF THEIR CHARACTERS."



The place where

This is about a team. . . A team whose existence resembles a rollercoaster. Life for the Justice League of America has been tough. In their long illustrious history they've had arguments about who was boss, traitors in their midst, their headquarters blown up several times, and members die. Yet the team has always endured in some shape or form. Now the latest incarnation has reached #100 with a new team and a new set of challenges.

" I think that in a sense it is one of the first of the team books of the Silver Age that grew from the Justice Society and it has kept that original tone & spirit," says Brian Augustyn, the Editor, explaining the longevity of the title, "That tradition and heritage carries it. The idea that you can go to one place and see this great array of terrific characters all allied against greater forces. I think the thing with the JL is that with so many powerful characters in one book you can kind of count on the fact that they go up against truly worthy opponents and that makes for exciting stories."

Art © DC Comics

In recent issues the title has been paying homage to it's past as the team has acquired a new headquarters, the "Space Base". Liberated from the Overmaster, the ship is strangely reminiscent of the satellite the JLA had in the 70's.

Augustyn denies the comparison. "We are trying to be conscious of what has gone on before, of the heritage without simply regurgitating the trappings. I think the new space base headquarters is very different from the satellite. We are trying to evoke that sense but it is an updated concept. In a way, with all three books, we gave them their on headquarters with familiar locales. Where Extreme Justice hang out is technically a cave headquarters. But it's not THE cave headquarters, it just happens to be inside a mountain. As with Task Force, there weren't any JL island headquarters but again island headquarters are very traditional. The Titans were on an island. There is the sense of trying to evoke the spirit without repeating the detail."

But even "the greatest superheroes in the world" have had their irrevocable differences and over the years many characters have split to form several sub-titles, including Justice League Europe, Justice League International, and more recently Extreme Justice and Justice League Task Force.

"Each of the other League titles has a specific agenda. The Task Force is a sort of training ground for the League itself, with the younger, less experienced characters working with J'onn J'onzz. Whereas the Extreme Justice book is very pro-active and, technically speaking they are not a Justice League team, they are an angry, reactionary off-shoot," enthuses Augustyn, who has worked on the title for the past three years, "I think it's the case that we've always treated the JLA relatively the same Pure and simple, it's the place where heroes meet."

But what makes the JLA different from other team books?

"The X-Men have a shared commonalty as do the Fantastic Four. in terms of their origin. The Fantastic Four are clearly a family, and while we get family aspects and common goal connections with between our heroes in the JLA this is less a case of heroes thrown together by common cause and more of a group who choose to be together again in the traditional sense of the word, bonding together, in a form of club or an organisation. There's the unity of choice, mutual admiration." Augustyn continues.

Certainly there is admiration and enthusiasm from Penciller, Chuck Wojtkiewicz, whose previous work has included various Impact titles and Justice League International. "[The JLA's] my favourite title! It's that weird larger than life operatic quality that makes it fun. I especially enjoy drawing Hawkman. And of course the Babes!"

So what has the future in store for our heroes?

"[With issue #100] because it's an up-sized book we wanted to accomplish a number of things. In addition to updating the various personal stories that have been running as sub-plots, and reminding people what stuff we had stirring in the pot, we wanted to expand the headquarters and get a sense of

TIM PILCHER VISITS THE JUSTICE LEAGUE OF AMERICA TO FIND THEM CELEBRATING THEIR 100TH ISSUE.

Heroes meet

exactly what a resource they have in this floating headquarters." relates Augustyn, "The main story concerns the return of a major villain from their recent past, Lord Havok. But he's a new Lord Havok completely refigured. He was an artificial intelligence in a robot body, but this is something different."

Wotjtkiewicz interjects "He's kinda like the old one except he's more tricked up. He's now massive with all these cylinders sticking out of him!"

"In addition to seeing the return of Lord Havok we are in fact seeing at the same moment the return of somebody else which should be a surprise. Another VERY important member of their past has been essentially woven into the story of Lord Havok."

Other interesting events in #100 include the return of Guy Gardiner, Warrior, the doors of the JLA being thrown wide open to all the superheroes in the world, and the Blue Devil joining the team.

"We decided that we wanted an agitator so we brought Blue Devil in. In #100 he becomes a full member and we learn along the way he has some secret agenda. But he's going to stir things up by being less serious and becoming a cross between Blue Beetle and the early Guy Gardiner. Less belligerent than Guy, but in a sense the character you love to hate."

Surely the real key to the success of the JLA is the characterisation and how some of DC's best heroes interact? "We have high profile characters, with Flash and Wonder Woman getting more high profile all the time. I like the fact that we have Obsidian and Nuklon forming a sort of buddy/brother relationship which, while not exactly the same, is similar to the Blue Beetle/Booster Gold relationship. I like to think what you can do with the dynamics. Hawkman's evolution has interesting possibilities and what Flash and Wonder Woman have been through lately we get to reflect some of that and the dynamics off other characters like what Firebird has been going through [with Tora, the Ice Maiden's, death] and this wrinkle we've thrown in with the new Ice Maiden."

But what about the other original members? Will we ever see the return of Green Arrow, Supes and Bats et al?

"Ideally the Fanboy in me would like to see all of the big guns including Superman and Batman there every month as well. Now Superman has such an involved and ongoing continuity with four books a month, with more planned, it's hard to keep him up with the League's continuity. There is always so much going on, and rightfully so as our flagship hero, to justify the time to fit him into the storylines. He's either doing this or doing that or he's dead! As much as we'd love to have him, I think it would be a headache for everybody. Batman, on a different level, is very much a loner. Right now I don't see either one of them belonging to the team. It would be wonderful if we could pull it off because when you think of 'The World's Greatest Heroes' then all of the world's greatest heroes should be there at least occasionally. Maybe in the near future we will with guest spots. I'd also like to see Captain Marvel drop by."

But when all is said and done it's the little guys Augustyn really has the soft spot for. "I enjoy working with the characters who don't have other books that they can evolve and go beyond the illusion of change. So often what happens is that you're borrowing another person's character and you can't even give them a bandage on their forehead let alone play any personal story out . You get a sense through the smaller characters what it's like to be them and their struggle to be part of a greater group and to a certain degree see these other greater heroes through their eyes. So the Blue Beetles, the Booster Golds, the Firebirds those kinds of characters are really important, that's where we get our soap opera."

And just like all good soap operas the Justice League of America will have it's ups, it's downs and maybe even a few loop-the-loops as it travels down life's log flume. CW

TIM PILCHER's recent contributions include interviews with Mike Carlin, Dan Jurgens and Warren Ellis.

GOD

Goddess by Garth Ennis and Phil Winslade is one of those projects that seem to have been in the works for all living memory. It is finally due out early April and fortunately - as Stephen Jewell discovers - it more than lives up to expectation.

Goddess © Garth Ennis & Phil Winslade

"ROSIE IS THIS REALLY NICE GIRL..."

Goddess was first mooted way back in 1989 and easily pre-dates the launch of the Vertigo line which it appears under. However, Winslade hasn't actually been working on it for six years. He had to clear other commitments before he could start so has probably be drawing *Goddess* for only two or three years.

I start back at the beginning and wonder what was Winslade's first interest in comics. "When I was a kid, I used to love reading comics. I was quite late apparently; I was talking to John McCrea and he started when he was six or seven - I didn't start until I was ten. I started reading American comics immediately. My first comic was *Howard the Duck #2* which is quite bizarre."

Winslade then went through the usual teenage thing of dropping comics in favour of girls and rock music, etc., only to be re-introduced to them at art college. "I met Steve Pugh there. We were on the same course doing graphic design and illustration B.A. Honours. He was always drawing comics. I'd drawn them previously but I never really thought that there was any real future in it...that you could earn a living at it.

"Steve was a big *2000AD* fan. I didn't really look at it. I was into comics like the *Conan* stuff - John Buscema and the Barry Smith *Conan*. I was into fantasy and Steve knew this and said 'There's this guy doing Slaine that you'd really like.' He showed me it and said 'His name's Glenn Fabry' and it turned out that I knew Glenn since he went to my school." It turns out that Fabry indirectly inspired Winslade to draw comics through their art teacher and common friends.

Winslade and Pugh first attempt at comics was a photocopied, self-published effort, *Eat in or Takeaway*. Winslade is surprised to learn that Steve has it listed in the Who's Who since only about 100 were printed and distributed around college [*I have to confess I first heard about it when we interviewed Steve Pugh for CW - Steve*]. Winslade later moved onto *Sideshow Comics* which also featured the work of Si Spencer and John McCrea.

I wonder what Winslade's first professional work was and it turns out to be the sample sketches for *Goddess* which just proceeded other work for Fleetway. Winslade also inked Steve Dillon on Epic Comic's *Car Warriors* series and even drew an *Impossible Man*

DESS

strip written by Marie Javins.

Winslade and Garth Ennis first met hack in 1989 at SCAM, a comic convention held in Coventry organised by former ARK editor - and *CW* contributor - Paul Duncan. "Garth had just finished *Troubled Souls* and we met vaguely at SCAM. He remembered my work and got in touch through Paul Duncan and Steve Pugh. We put a few proposals together. Then Archie Goodwin phoned Garth and said 'Would you like to do a strip for DC?' because he'd just read *Troubled Souls* and Garth said 'Yeah. Sure. I'd love to.' He sent up a synopsis and asked me to do proposal sketches because he wanted me to draw it."

Ennis was just starting out when *Goddess* was first mooted but has since gone on to make his name at DC on the likes of *Hellblazer* and *Preacher*. He wrote *Goddess* back in 1991-92 and admitted in *CW #37* that it is very different to his current work. *Goddess* concerns Rosie Nolan, a young, English girl who inexplicably develops violent paranormal powers. Rosie attempts to control her newfound abilities over the course of the eight issue series and is pursued all over the globe by an obsessed C.I.A. agent and a mad British cop. "Rosie is this really nice girl, who's quite naive at the beginning but, at the end, she's quite sophisticated. I designed all the characters to be fun to draw so I enjoyed drawing all of them even the Butcher Boys," claims Winslade.

"The Butcher Boys are these two lumbering, trainspotter types who are really, really stupid. They're great fun to draw. They're really British in their nerdishness: they've got anoraks and all the things your Mum bought for you when you were a kid because their Mum still buys them for them. They are identical twins which could be a bit of a pain." The brothers can be told apart by the different colour coats that they wear and Winslade admits that he had to be careful not to get them mixed up.

Winslade is pencilling, inking and colouring all of *Goddess* himself which is why it has taken him so long. "Its all blue line colours. I get a chance to mold things and do things really nicely. I really love the story and I'm really protective of it and the characters as well. Its probably the only chance I'll get to do this and do it properly. Thankfully, Archie Goodwin, who is such a wonderful editor, has given me the time to do it as I see fit so I haven't had to rush anything apart from the obvious needs of eating."

Winslade admits that he is something of a perfectionist. "I'm never happy with anything I do to that extent. A line has to be drawn and I'll always feel there's a compromise even if there is one or not. I could sit for hours and re-pencil and re-pencil which I sometimes do. The funny thing is that the pencils were really loose when I started but they've got tighter and tighter. It's really odd when you come to draw it because you've got all this potential where the story can go. Basically, you've got the storytelling down and as you slowly nail it down as you ink it all that potential is lost."

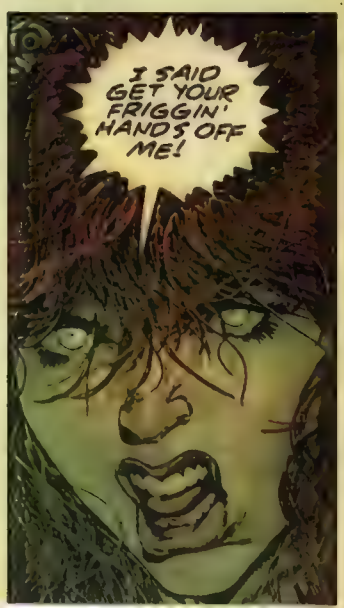
Winslade also enjoyed working with Ennis. "Garth's a very good writer in the respect that he's very good visually most of the time. Every writer's got some sticky points but Garth's got fewer than most writers I've worked with. He does think a story through fluently. There's only a couple of times where I've tinkered with something to make the storytelling better.

"The thing with Garth is that he has a wonderful way of doing a panel. He comes up with these images which are so different. You've never seen them drawn in comics before. You sit there going 'Oh my goodness. How am I going to draw that?' They're so impressive in themselves, for example, there's this full page spread and it just says 'Big wide shot of crowd looking at container ship as it has been left by tidal wave halfway through a building.' I've never seen anybody draw that in comics before. He comes up with some really odd, slightly surreal images which are feasible but very unlikely. They're wonderful to draw because they're on that edge. They're not totally out of it and you have to make them as possible as possible."

Ennis has been unstinting in his praise for Winslade and believes that everybody will soon be knocking at his door. Winslade is much more modest about his abilities but is keeping his slate clean until *Goddess* is finished. However, he will be providing the covers for Vertigo's next *Vamps* by Elaine Lee, with whom Winslade worked on a story for the NBM erotic anthology, *Skintight Orbit*. He would like to draw mainstream characters like Batman or Superman. Winslade is "more than happy" to work with an inker if they complimented his work. He admits that it would be the only way that he could ever do a regular book - which he would "love to do."

Hopes are certainly high for *Goddess* and Winslade is hoping that it could bridge the gap between DC's mainstream titles and Vertigo's more eclectic output. "It's not a mainstream comic as such. It's more mainstream than a lot of Vertigo titles but its not an adamantium claws and full mask job. I suppose you'd call it character led fiction and its a bit in between two posts." CW

***STEPHEN JEWELL** spends his time away from the typewriter boozing it up down the Paradise Club listening to Jungle music.*



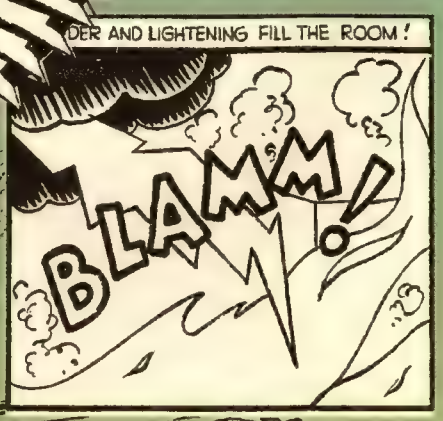
JACK KIRBY THE KING

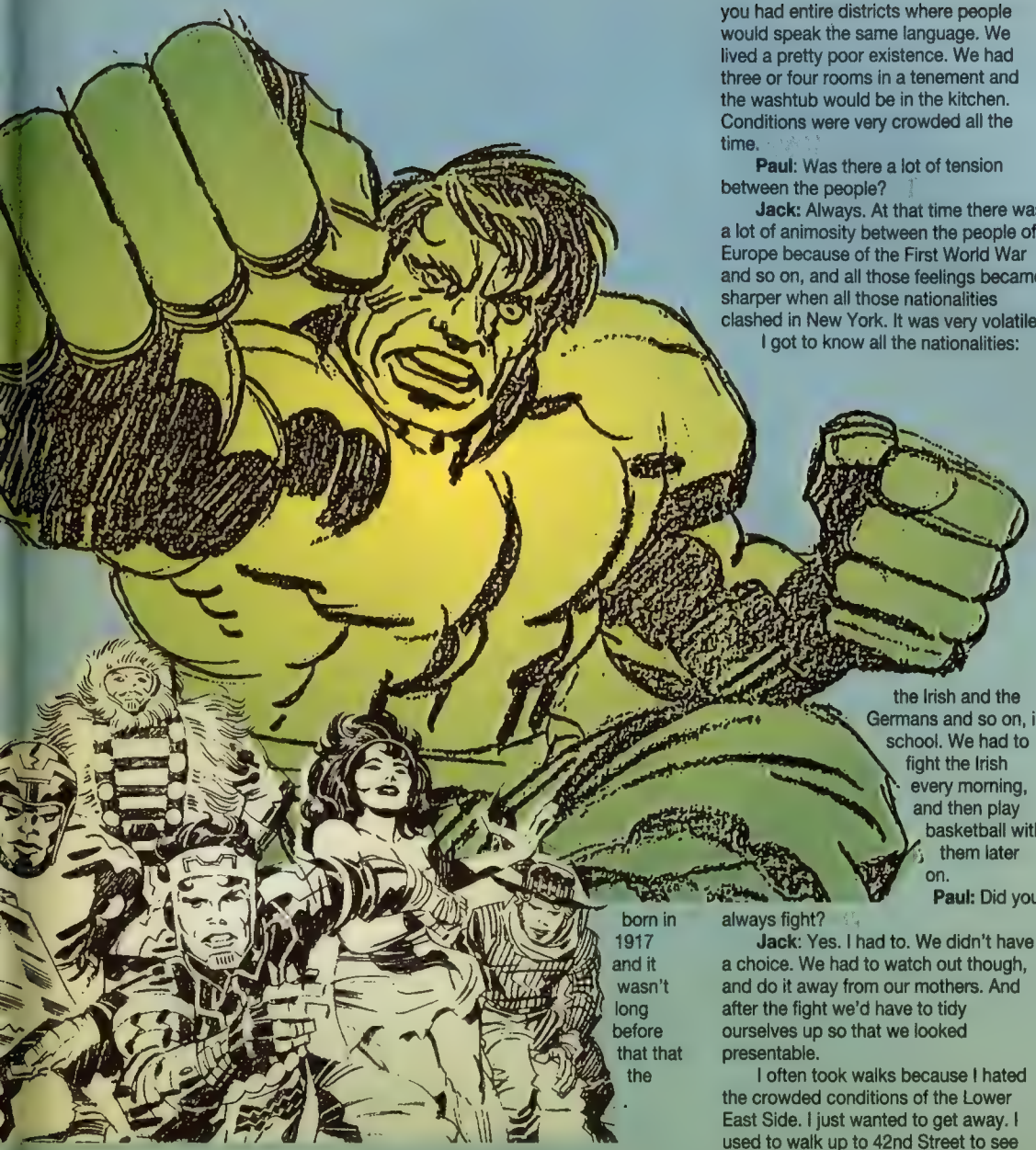
Jack Kirby was born in New York City on August 28 1917. Before his death on February 6 1994 he created, wrote and drew hundreds of strips and comics, from The Diary of Doctor Hayward, Black Buccaneer, Socko the Seadog, Abdul Jones, Detective Riley, Blue Bolt, Blue Beetle, Bulletman, Young Allies, Captain America, the Boy Commandos, the Newsboy Legion, Manhunter, Boy's Ranch, the Boy Explorers, My Date, Young Romance, Young Love, Black Magic, Fighting American, Sandman, Foxhole, In Love, Police Trap, Bullseye, Win-A-Prize, Skymasters, Challengers of the Unknown, The Fly, Private Strong, Green Arrow, the Fantastic Four, the Incredible Hulk, Thor, Sgt. Fury, the Avengers, the X-Men, Iron Man, Nick Fury Agent of S.H.I.E.L.D., Silver Surfer, Jimmy Olsen, the Forever People, the New Gods, Spirit World, In the Days of the Mob, Kamandi, the Demon, Omac, The Losers, Kobra, the Dingbats of Danger Street, Justice Inc., 2001: A Space Odyssey, The Eternals, Black Panther, Machine Man, Devil Dinosaur, Thundarr, Captain Victory, Silver Star, Destroyer Duck, Hunger Dogs and Super Powers. At the time of his death, Topps were publishing 'The Kirbyverse' group of titles starring Night Glider, Bombast and Captain Glory.

It is impossible to quantify the enormous contribution Jack Kirby made to the comic book industry in a short space like this. However, we are pleased to present the following interview conducted by Paul Duncan at Jack & Roz Kirby's home in 1990.

Paul Duncan: The first thing I wanted to know was what sort of atmosphere you grew up in.

Jack Kirby: It was very rough. I was





born in 1917 and it wasn't long before that that the

"IT WASN'T THAT I PARTICULARLY WANTED TO DRAW CARTOONS, BUT I KNEW THAT IF I TRIED I WOULD BECOME GOOD AT IT."

immigrants started to pour into New York. My parents came from Austria and my surname is Kurtzberg, not Kirby. We lived on New York's Lower East Side, which was a tenement district filled with people from a variety of countries. Our community was full of people from the same part of Europe. If you kept walking uptown you would find different communities who came from different parts of the world.

The immigrants had a tendency to move to where their own kind are, so you had entire districts where people would speak the same language. We lived a pretty poor existence. We had three or four rooms in a tenement and the washtub would be in the kitchen. Conditions were very crowded all the time.

Paul: Was there a lot of tension between the people?

Jack: Always. At that time there was a lot of animosity between the people of Europe because of the First World War and so on, and all those feelings became sharper when all those nationalities clashed in New York. It was very volatile.

I got to know all the nationalities: the Irish and the Germans and so on, in school. We had to fight the Irish every morning, and then play basketball with them later on.

Paul: Did you always fight?

Jack: Yes. I had to. We didn't have a choice. We had to watch out though, and do it away from our mothers. And after the fight we'd have to tidy ourselves up so that we looked presentable.

I often took walks because I hated the crowded conditions of the Lower East Side. I just wanted to get away. I used to walk up to 42nd Street to see the cartoonists at a newspaper. I met one called Walter Berndt who would do some work and then play golf in his office. I thought 'Oh boy! That's the sort of job I want.' I went up there regularly to meet the cartoonists and orientated myself to that kind of life.

Paul: Did you always want to draw?

Jack: It wasn't that I particularly wanted to draw cartoons, but I knew that if I tried I would become good at it. I was instinctive and aggressive - everyone was at that time - so if anyone asked I'd say 'I can do it. What's the job?' You had to be pushy and aggressive to get the job in that environment. You didn't consider anyone else. I took on guys that were twice my size without hesitation. I knew where to hit them so that they stayed down.

Paul: You had a good education.

Jack: It's all a matter of watching other people and learning from that.

Paul: You moved on to work on *Betty Boop* for the Fleischer Brothers animation studio.

Jack: They had a very large studio. I'd draw six Betty Boop's and pass them on to the next guy, who'd draw six more and then pass them on to the next guy. One day I suddenly realised that I was working in a factory, which I didn't like. My father was working in a garment factory and I was working in a cartoon factory, see, and I didn't want that. I wanted to do what I liked. What sort of cartoons and how many of them should be up to me, I thought. So I began to look for other cartoon work.

Paul: I read somewhere that your mother stopped you from going to Florida when the Fleischer studios moved down there.

Jack: That's right. I always did what my mother wanted. I wanted to go to Hollywood one time, but she stopped me. When I asked her why she said it was because there were a lot of naked women in Hollywood and she didn't want me to fool around with naked women. So I didn't go to Hollywood.

Paul: But you're here now.

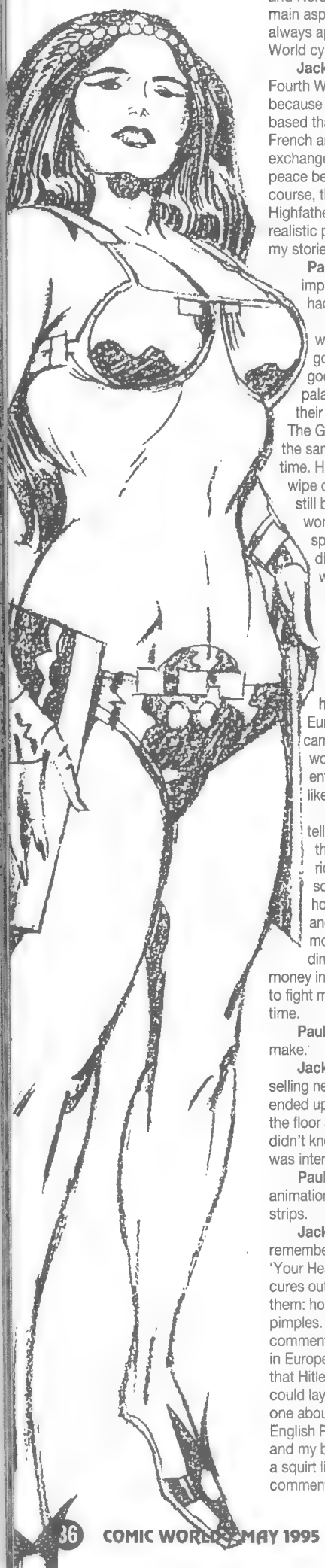
Jack: True, but I'm here legitimately now.

She didn't want me to be like James Cagney, who I thought was a wonderful actor. We loved actors like Cagney and Pat O'Brien, who used to play the fast-talking reporter, and hated the villains like George Raft and Boris Karloff. We took these people on face value when we went to the pictures, even though they were probably all great guys in real life. They probably preferred to drink pop rather than whisky.

Paul: So you were influenced a lot by the movies.

Jack: Anything visual. We wanted to escape from the world outside as quickly as possible. I read all the classics at a very early age because I spent a lot of my time in the library. I loved Robin Hood, King Arthur and all the English classics. If questions were asked in school I'd get up immediately and answer to the amazement of my teachers. I read all the mythologies, and later, in my comics work, I tried to use and add to the mythologies.

RIPPING OPEN SIVANA'S SAFE. MARVEL INVESTIGATES.
SIVANA PLANNED THAT THIS SAFE SHOULD SURVIVE THE FIRE, WITH WHAT'S INSIDE. LET'S HAVE A LOOK!
THESE ARE PLANS FOR SCIENTIFIC WEAPONS TO ATTACK THE WORLD. POOR SIVANA WILL HAVE TO DOPE THEM OUT FROM THE BEGINNING AGAIN.
NOW TO TAKE UP THE TRAIL OF MY FIRE FLINGING FRIENDS.



AND, SPEAKING OF THE HUMAN RACE, LET'S RETURN TO THE MOST COLORFUL SEGMENT THAT WE CAN FIND--
BEN, YOU ACTED TOO QUICKLY! I WASN'T YET READY TO LAUNCH THE MISSILE!
BIG DEAL! A GUY COULD DIE OF OLD AGE WAITIN' FER YOU TA MAKE UP YER MIND!
YOU CAN'T EVEN HICCUP WITHOUT YA GOTTA MAKE A SPEECH FIRST!
REED'S OUR LEADER, MAN! AND IF YOU DON'T LIKE IT--!
AWRIGHT! AWRIGHT! DON'T SCARE ME TA DEATH, KIDDO!

Paul: I love all the Roman, Greek and Norse myths and that's one of the main aspects of your work that has always appealed to me. Your Fourth World cycle is excellent.

Jack: Darkseid, the villain in the Fourth World comics, is interesting because the hero, Orion, is his son. I based that on an old custom where the French and English kings would exchange offspring in order to ensure peace between the two countries. Of course, that's what Darkseid did with Highfather. So I based all my work on a realistic premise which is why, I believe, my stories worked.

Paul: No matter how grand or imposing the people looked they had human emotions.

Jack: I always thought that it would be presumptuous of me to go beyond people. I've give these gods great powers and grand palaces and gardens to live in, but their actions were always human. The Greek and Egyptian legends were the same. Zeus would be angry all the time. He may split a mountain in two, or wipe out an entire continent but he'd still be angry and feel love for a woman like every other spontaneous human being. The difference was that his actions were superhuman.

Paul: The myths and legends were the superhero comics, the popular culture, of their day.

Jack: I believe they were. Other popular cultures, like horror stories, came from Eastern European people sitting around the camp fire at night after a hard day working in the fields. They had to entertain themselves and stories like *Count Dracula* came out of it.

My mother and father used to tell me stories that they heard when they lived in Europe. So I got a rich mixture of *Mark Twain* at school and peasant stories at home. They were very entertaining and better than going to the movies. Cheaper too! It cost a dime to get in but that was a lot of money in those days - I remember having to fight my old man for a quarter one time.

Paul: Money must have been hard to make.

Jack: I tried to make money by selling newspapers, but I was lousy at it. I ended up throwing the papers down onto the floor and walking away from them. I didn't know how to sell them and nobody was interested in buying them.

Paul: After you stopped working in animation you went into newspaper strips.

Jack: I did all sorts of things. I remember some one-panel strips called 'Your Health Comes First' where I'd take cures out of medical books and illustrate them: how to cure anything from hives to pimples. Then I did cartoons with editorial comments about the situation developing in Europe because it was around the time that Hitler was grabbing everything he could lay his hands on. I remember I did one about Neville Chamberlain, the English Prime Minister, talking to Hitler and my boss called me up asking where a squirt like me gets the nerve to make a comment about these people. These were people who were conquering the world. Refugees from every European country were fleeing their homes and coming to America yet, strangely, no-one seemed to care that much. I see everything in black and white, and I draw it in black and white. I don't dance around issues.

Paul: I suppose you heard lots of stories about the Nazis?

Jack: Sure. I worked with one fellow who owned a big department store in Berlin with his father and he told me about one day when the Nazis parked a car across the road, got out of the car and just stood outside the door with their hands behind them. My friend was terrified. His father told his chauffeur to drive on, afraid to go into his own store. They went home, packed their bags and came to America. He ended up working for Joe Simon & myself in our studio.

I talked to all the refugees coming into the city and that way I got a picture of what was going on in Europe and put it into my work. I even got phone calls from American Nazis, asking me why I drew these stories about Hitler. I'd say that I thought he was a so and so and they'd say they'd wait for me downstairs. There was a big Nazi camp on Long Island and they'd have meetings at Madison Square Gardens where the stormtroopers would throw out the cops. They solved the Nazi problem in America later on by grabbing them and drafting them.

Paul: Most of your stories are about the individual fighting everyone else. At the beginning of your career the hero always had the Government, who were good, backing him up, but in later years the hero seemed to be standing up against authority.

Jack: There's no real question of whether the Government were bad or good. Society decides that. If a guy is going to rob a store he makes that decision. The cops who are waiting for him don't decide for him. Society doesn't decide for him. He knows they are waiting. I thank God that most criminals get caught and we are able to continue our society on a liveable level.

Paul: You always wrote praising the individual, yet the Nazis never saw things that way.

Jack: No. They saw the individual as part of the machine, as cogs. And they played rough in order to get their way.

Paul: You eventually got drafted into the Army.

Jack: Yes. I landed on Omaha Beach ten days after D-Day. When I came back from the war I went back into the comics business and started to create all these new titles. Comics were in a very bad way.

Paul: With Joe Simon, you started and created a lot of romance comics. I don't think many people appreciate how subtle your work can be.

Jack: I just thought that I should do those stories as real as I could. I don't think they worked as well as they could have and I soon realised I had extended beyond my limitations. Ever since then I've made sure that I never went beyond my limitations.

Paul: Your art is renowned for its exaggerated actions which, I think, first appeared in the original *Captain America*.

Jack: Yes. Those were full of large panels and fight scenes of people going through windows and smashing furniture. I always put a lot of action in. The exaggeration came about because I would feel the actions happen to me. I expended all the power and energy I could in carrying out the picture. Of course you can't hit a picture or anything like that, but I felt I was in those fights, that I was really there.

Paul: Did your body go tense?

Jack: Absolutely. I made all the faces and did all the movements. I showed how I would fight. How I would fall over chairs and fly through windows. I would involve myself in those sequences as much as I would involve myself in the other sequences, when the characters were interacting. What I did for the reader was that I never lied to them, just like I'd never lie to any person I met. At the bottom of all my stories is the respect I have for the next guy. I never sell him short. I try to entertain him in a genuine fashion. That's all I've ever tried to do really. My ideas would progress with each issue, some being more grandiose than others. A lot of characters would be more enriched by these ideas and grew in scope, but they were always real people. Real people who lived out the lives I'd given them.

Paul: A lot of the work you did was fantastical but some books, like *Young Love*, were about real people, the sort of people I assumed you grew up with.

Jack: I subconsciously retained a lot of those elements in my work when I was dealing with situations that I may actually have encountered. But when it came to thinking about how someone from a different background would think, say someone from the Mid-West, I would have to act as if I had come from that background. I'd have to imagine having the money to buy a car, to go out at night and get drunk. I couldn't really do these things, but I could imagine what I would do had I been in those situations. No matter how outlandish the situations were the characters would act within the boundaries of my rationale.

The best thing about telling stories is injecting yourself into these different situations.

Paul: In some ways you're acting like God in these stories.

Jack: I suppose in some way I am - perhaps all storytellers are. I don't really think so. I'm not putting myself above the other fellow reading my story - I'm trying to communicate with him. And it works because I get letters saying that I'm full of bull and that I don't know what I'm talking about, even when I think I'm dead right.

These letter get printed in the comics so everyone can see the rebuttal. That's the essence of democracy - there's always some guy who see's it in a different light. That's life.

Paul: The mixture of races and creeds is very noticeable in your work.

Jack: All my life I had seen all walks of life, different nationalities, but they weren't reflected in the comics. That's one of the reasons I mixed up the nationalities of The Newsboy Legion and all those sort of stories. At that time the newspapers didn't write about black people. There were no black people being elected. There were no Martin Luther King's around, see. The only black people I saw were in the army and on my block. I accepted them like everyone else, but all the orientation was towards white people. I didn't realise it at the time but I came up with the first black superhero character in comics: The Black Panther.

Paul: You started work on a comic of the Sixties TV series *The Prisoner,* but it never appeared.

Jack: It just didn't work out. In many ways it was an appropriate book for me because it was about the individual trying to break out from the limitations placed on him. There wasn't any action but it was interesting trying to put a clever psychological ending on it. I gave it my best shot but it didn't work out and I moved onto other things.

Art © Respective Publishers

The rights of the individual were always important to me because they were my rights. The politicians on the Lower East Side where I grew up were crooked, but that didn't mean that I had to grow up that way. At school they told you what were the right things to do and then you discovered what the world was really like. A child's thoughts are immature and confined to a district, but when everything becomes unconfined and you start to think in wider dimensions, that's when I think you mature and become a man. That's why I think so much of America, because America gives you the chance to do it. If you feel confined by the way people think in New York, then move to Indiana and find out what they are thinking there. It's a big world and there's a place for all of us on it. Everyone should try to fulfil their potential and do what they have to do.

Paul: Do you always approach things very spontaneously?

Jack: Yes. I always do. I always believe that a gut reaction is a real reaction. You can sit back and think about the plot and the characters, which become more and more convoluted. Then you talk yourself out of it or you make it so convoluted no-one knew what was going on. So I always acted spontaneously and that way I never looked like a fool.

Paul: When I read your work I always get a feeling of passion and energy.

Jack: That's right.

Paul: But I always thought it was a pity there were thought balloons slowing it down.

Jack: There were all kinds of readers, some of whom were slower than others, so we had to help them along so that they understood it all. Certainly, you're the type of guy who would get all the meanings and ramifications of the situation immediately, but others would take an hour to work it out. So if we explained everything clearly we would reach everyone.

Paul: The danger with heroes is that they act above the law. Did you ever have a moral problem about them doing that?

Jack: No, because they always came down on the side of the law. They handed the prisoners over to the cops at the end of the story. Even if it was set on a desert island they'd find a cop somewhere.

Paul: Did it ever get lonely drawing comics for hours on end?

Jack: No because I always had my own friends, my family and guys to fight and laugh with in the office. We'd go out to lunch together and have fun.

Paul: How did you work with editors?

Jack: We all knew what we knew and got on with what we thought was our job. My job, as the artist, was to be a salesman. Once the reader picks up one of my comics they have to keep it in their hands and read it. Every page was balanced and composed so that the reader never got bored. I mixed double-page spreads with crowd scenes, with head shots, with foreshortening. If you had twenty-four pages of people seen from the same angle, no matter how good the story was, you'd bore the reader silly.

The editor never pretended it was great literature. He just collected all the cartoons together in one book and facilitates the production. He's not interested in rewriting the whole damn book. Nobody wants to knock himself out doing his job and do more work than was necessary. I'd turn in my pages at the office, talk to the editor and publisher, then go out to eat.

Paul: Did you meet all these people, Roz?

Roz: I never went out to the offices that much, but I saw the pages Jack would be working on. Sometimes I'd even do a bit of inking, like on *Boy Commandos* and *Green Hornet*.

Jack: She used to design lingerie when we were dating, so she knew how to handle a brush.

I liked to work at night, when no-one was around, so that I could be alone with my thoughts. If someone came to visit then I put my work aside.

Paul: The reason I asked about being lonely is because some artists get worried if there is no response from the audience.

Jack: That never worried me. I was only concerned about making a living because I came from that kind of climate. I can go into town and make friends any time I want. I can start a fight or do any damn thing I please. The world is like that for me. I can go over to the hot dog stand and shoot the breeze with anyone who's around.

Paul: Do you see comics as a serious art medium?

Jack: Absolutely. I don't do anything stupid or invalid in order to make fun of comics.

Paul: In your Fourth World series of comics you made Superman more vulnerable. Did you have any adverse reaction to that?

Jack: Only from DC Comics, who didn't like me changing the character. They didn't like the way I'd drawn his head so they got someone to redraw them.

Those sort of things happen in the course of the job. I always give every job everything I can. I never give anyone less than my best because I couldn't live with that.

Paul: You moved all the mythology to the present day and played with those concepts, which nobody else has even tried.

Jack: There'd be no point in doing mythology unless the reader could relate to it in some way. For instance, what if Merlin was living in the Twentieth Century? Would he be a second-rate magician, or would he try to impress us? How could he impress a sophisticated audience like us? The people in medieval times would be easy to impress.

Paul: Do you think of ideas like this all the time?

Jack: Yes. I always ask questions. All day, every day. We all live with questions that we never know the answers to. And when we do find an answer, it always leads to another question. I ask questions of the Bible. I don't think it tells us everything. For some reason we didn't dig up everything. We only know what has been given to us.

When you look at the idea of Noah's Ark, how big does it have to be in order to carry every animal on the planet? It's make the Queen Mary look like a rowboat. And what would cause the Earth to flood in the first place?

Paul: You're thinking about these things in literal terms, not as symbolism.

Jack: Exactly. Because the *Bible* makes it all literal. The *Bible* says that Noah's Ark and The Flood physically existed, so they have to be thought of in literal terms.

Paul: Earlier, you explained all about your versions of Angels, The Horn Of Gabriel and so on, which hang along the walls of your house. They are very powerful images.

Jack: That power comes from the *Bible* itself, because the writing gives me that kind of vision. I don't think the *Bible* gives us wisdom. I think it gives us vision. The *Bible* says that an Angel appears, but it doesn't answer any practical questions as to what it looks like, which galaxy it came from and so on. We believe the *Bible* even though we don't have all the details.

Paul: It just struck me that the old myths and legends were often the basis for religions.

Jack: Of course. And the new religion is the discussion about how many galaxies there are. We don't know. And each galaxy is a system of stars and planets, so anything could be out there.

Paul: It's interesting that you should relate religion with space and the stars.

Jack: I relate religion to science because everyone I talk to, no matter what religion they have, when I ask them,

where their God is, they reply 'up there' and point to the sky.

Paul: Do you think religion is more a series of ideas and moral codes rather than something concrete.

Jack: No, religion doesn't help us at all. We defy religion, just as we defy laws in order to remain ourselves. What restrains us is the fear of being restrained.

Paul: And civilisation is nothing but a series of restraints.

Jack: The only way to stop a thing is by extreme violence. They stopped the outlaws in the Wild West by hanging them in the middle of the street, so that everyone could see what would happen to them if they broke the law as well.

In today's world you can only persuade people by showing them. If you show them they'll believe you.

Paul: Your work is very physical. What about the mental side?

Jack: Mental things are physical terms being decided upon. Like deciding whether to make an atom bomb or not. You physically work on that until it is done. As an aside, I had the atom bomb in comics two years before it was actually done in real life. Tesla was carrying out experiments and I knew he'd succeed in completing it. Whatever you decide to do can be achieved. If we haven't got the means or technology to do it now, we'll have it in the future.

Paul: Your work has lots of panoramas of cities and machines. Are you overawed by technology?

Jack: Not really. I'm afraid of us. I'm afraid of you. I'm afraid of Oliver North. I'm afraid of the next guy, because he has the power, not the technology. Technology comes out of him. It doesn't come out of a warehouse. People don't realise that they can do whatever they want once they put their mind to it.

Paul: Where does your imagination come from? Is it something you work for, or is it a talent which only you can have?

Jack: I know I have it but I don't know how far I can reach for it. Eventually, I reach far enough and I grab it.

Roz: I've been married to Jack for the forty-seven years he's been in comics and I ask him the same question and he always says that it just comes naturally.

Jack: I just do it.

Paul: So when you draw, can you already see the image in your head?

Jack: Yes. I know what has to go where, when it has begun, and when it is completed, and I won't do any more than that. And if you look at my pictures there's nothing else you can do to them.

Roz: When he was doing the Fourth World books I asked him how did he remember where one book finished and the others started and he just did.

Paul: Your work creates a sense of awe, something which is missing in other people's work.

Jack: Thank you.

Paul: For that reason, I thought you were the perfect artist to do *2001: A Space Odyssey*.

Jack: Although I admire Kubrick's film, I didn't think that what he did with the main character at the end, changing him into a star-child, was practical or natural. It would be far more practical to take a gene from the brain and regrow the body so that the star-child could live forever.

Paul: We already have test-tube babies.

Jack: Yes, so if it's in someone's mind to do it, it will happen. *2001* was about how endless space is and that's a concept that the human mind cannot deal with. We live in an environment where there is an end to everything.

Paul: We surround ourselves with walls.

Jack: Yes.

Paul: Do you want to go out there?

Jack: Not particularly. I'm living very pleasantly and it wouldn't bother me one way or the other. If I was assigned to do it I'd go along. Did you know that I was going to train with Neil Armstrong? I was living on Long Island, New York when NASA phoned me up and asked me to draw the astronauts when they were training for the moonshot. I was going to pull sixteen G's on the machine and do all that stuff. I asked if I was going to go up with them but they said no, so I said to Hell with them. What's the point of going through all that hard work and not getting the chance to go up as well?

Roz: We always say that he was born before his time. He belongs to a future generation.

Paul: I think that even in the future he would be ahead of his time.

Jack: There have been storytellers in all times and we know this because their work has survived. What makes the Bible so intriguing is that it has survived thousands of years and will live on for thousands more.

Paul: I think your work will survive in the future too, in the same way that the Greek and Roman and Norse mythologies have lived on.

You've seen and done many things. Are you pleased with what you've achieved?

Jack: We all learn to live with our experiences and make a plus out of it. When we reach middle or old age and look back on our lives we must be able to see that we did a good job, because we can live with that. That's the most a human being can do.

Being human is living through all the bad things you've done as well as the good ones. You know what a good meal tastes like, what a good film or book feels like, what a good home is like. That's very satisfying. I live in a place where I can fulfil all those things and live and damn good life without breaking any laws. So my job is living my life.

Paul: So does your present life involve any drawing?

Jack: I think I've drawn it all, though I don't think I've written it all. I'm presently writing a novel which I can't talk about and there's also a biography being done by a publisher. The *Bible* drawings are being brought out in limited editions with sculptures of the drawings accompanying them. I enjoy seeing my work appearing in other media.

I've done comics. If anyone's done comics it's me. I'm out of that now.

Roz: I don't think Jack could draw the way they draw now. Everyone in today's comics looks so wholesome and idealistic.

Jack: My characters are grittier and more realistic. My inking style is completely different. My generation is passed because we had limitations which today's creators have gone beyond. I have values which were in vogue when I was creating comics and I will not drop them for today's market. Having said that, it is an evolutionary process which today's creators must try to progress for the next generation.

Paul: When you look back, which do you think is the best work you've done?

Jack: My best work? All of it. I always felt it was as good, if not better, as anyone else's. It comes from the urge to beat the other guy. I always felt that I could. And I did.

Paul: Thank you very much for you time.

Jack: It's been our pleasure. CW

The above interview originally appeared in Paul Duncan's magazine ARK and is © Paul Duncan. We would also like to thank Chris Harper of Jack Kirby Quarterly for the selection of artwork taken from his own collection. For further information about Jack Kirby Quarterly send an SAE to Chris at 25 Napier Drive, The Parklands, Tipton, W. Midlands DY4 7NW. Paul Duncan will be well known to our readers having been an irregular contributor since issue 6. He has recently been spending every spare moment researching a book on Gerald Kersh.

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Fantas Fourplay

Quietly and with a minimum of fuss, the *Fantastic Four*, Marvel Comics' oldest super-hero comicbook, has just reached its 400th issue. However, despite respectable sales (the title is consistently among Marvel's own top twenty selling titles and its circulation is growing), for years 'The World's Greatest Comic Magazine' has been slagged off for being past its sell-by date. Now new *Fantastic Four* editor Nel Yomtov and his boss, Marvel Classics executive editor Mark Gruenwald, believe the magic could be back, but with no changes to the creative team planned (ex-Marvel editor-in-chief Tom DeFalco writes, Paul Ryan pencils) and no other major changes in sight, what makes them believe same old, same old equals new improved? We sent old *FF* fan Alan Woollcombe along to find out...

Let's get one thing clear: for its first 102 issues the *Fantastic Four*, written by Stan Lee and drawn by Jack Kirby, WAS The World's Greatest Comic Magazine, full stop. Unfortunately, that was thirty years ago, since when, with rare exceptions (notably the John Byrne era, issues #232-294 for completists out there), it has been, well, forgettable. Yet while the world wasn't watching, the Fantastic Four have undergone dramatic - not to say traumatic - changes: why, in the past two dozen issues alone Sue Richards (alias the Invisible Woman) has been possessed, lost her boy Franklin (he came back - ten years older) and her husband Reed (he didn't); Ben Grimm (the Thing) and Johnny Storm (the Human Torch) have lost their loves (Johnny also lost his baby, a half-alien egg, but let's not get into that...); and Reed Richards (Mr Fantastic) apparently lost his life. In between, the team have filled in the commercial breaks by saving the world, which leads us conveniently into this double-sized landmark quadruple centenary issue...

Ah yes, issue #400. Something special for the anniversary, sir? Over to editor Yomtov: "400 is a resolution of the confrontation between the Watchers and the Celestials [the 'Watchers Lie' storyline]. 400 also provides Sue's greatest demonstration that she is the unquestionable leader of the team, that she deserves that role. She also finally comes to grips with the fact that Reed has in fact died..." That is what is known as irony: as any Marvel reader born before yesterday has long suspected, Reed Will Be Back.

But in Marvel terms, issue #400 is not the FF's real Big Event for T95: that comes next. "Atlantis Rising is a two months' long crossover," explains executive editor Gruenwald, "that

stic

involves the Fantastic Four, Fantastic Force, the last two issues of *Namor* [#61-62] and of Warlock and two issues of something called *Fantastic Four: Atlantis Rising*, which are bookends for the whole storyline." Yomtov carries on reading the blurb: "Essentially, the undersea realm of Atlantis has risen, and that was put into action in the course of the Namor title - Morgan Le Fay is behind all that. While that is going on, Nathaniel [Reed's father] quite accidentally sets into motion the destruction of the Watcher's home on the Moon, so the Inhumans, seeing that their world is crumbling on the Moon, go to Earth to reclaim their former home of Atlantis. That sets up the entire storyline..."

"WE'RE STRIVING FOR A KIND OF CONTINUITY, WITH FANTASTIC FOUR AS THE MOTHER BOOK."

Fantastic Four © Marvel Entertainment

What makes this earth-shaking crossover particularly appropriate for the FF is the fact that it is, in effect, an old boys' reunion. "It involves a whole bunch of concepts that originated in the Fantastic Four: Namor and the Atlanteans (which had their precursors in the Golden Age [the 1940s] but were reintroduced in the modern Marvel Universe in FF #4), the Inhumans [introduced in FF #44-45], Warlock [who as Him emerged from a cocoon in #66-67] - plus Monster Island, whose monsters were first introduced in FF #1." The crossover also marks a hail-and-farewell to Adam Warlock, whose own comic was cancelled with issue #42 and who is being given a one-way ticket to the Malibu Ultraverse.

Thereafter, it's all change for the team line-up again: "The Human Torch will have left the Fantastic Four at the end of our crossover and will be appearing in Fantastic Force (that book has, unfortunately, not been doing very well, so we're going to try to generate some interest there) during the span of FF #401-405. The character of Kristoff, [Doctor] Doom's protege, somewhat has been accepted into the Fantastic Four, so the core line-up of membership of the group for the better part of 1995 will be Ben, Sue, Kristoff and Antman (he is still hanging around). Reed will be coming back in #404 (and Doom in #403) but we're leaning toward the idea of not bringing him back to the team immediately - I want to do something very dramatic to the character which would almost prevent him from being part of the team. We're trying to pull some surprises on his return."

Asked about the future direction of what he terms the Fantastic Four group, bergruppenfhrer Gruenwald's buzzword is coordination: "The main thing in general [is that] there is finally going to be extremely tight coordination between the Fantastic Four and its offspring book, Fantastic Force, and we're going to tie the Fantastic Four Unlimited quarterly into the ongoing storylines." Yomtov echoes that: "Now that all the FF titles are coming out of one office, we're striving for a kind of continuity with Fantastic Four as the mother book." As to any further offspring of that mother book, he is categorical that 1995 won't see any annuals, specials or reprints (other than a one-off *Greatest Villains Of The Fantastic Four* trade paperback). However, the cupboard isn't totally bare: "We're hoping to put out a 99¢ comicbook this summer, which will be bi-monthly [every two months] and tie into continuity - we're leaning toward a Thing/Ben Grimm-driven book for that, so the natural comparison will be with the old Marvel *Two-In-One*." Apart from the all-new *Skrull Kill Krew* and a one-off *Collectors' Preview*, that's the lot.

Let's be clear: we're not talking grand revelations here. On future plotlines and possible aftershocks of the *Atlantis Rising* storyline, Nel Yomtov delivers a standard issue "That I'd rather not say. But," he adds helpfully, "there's an awful lot Tom [DeFalco] hasn't told me yet. I really love his writing – he has a wonderful way with each character and he's great at writing group books. He can tell you more." Fine - except that, despite repeated requests, Marvel's publicity machine proves unequal to the task of setting up an interview with the veteran scribe. And yet, even without any detailed in-filling from DeFalco to back it up, the editors' faith in the FF's future is infectious (with nary a hint of tongue-in-cheek, Gruenwald calls the book a trendsetter) and rising sales show they may be onto something. The Fantastic Four may not be the world's greatest comic magazine once more yet, but if editorial commitment counts for anything, you'll believe that for Reed, Sue, Ben and Johnny, life could begin again at 400. CW

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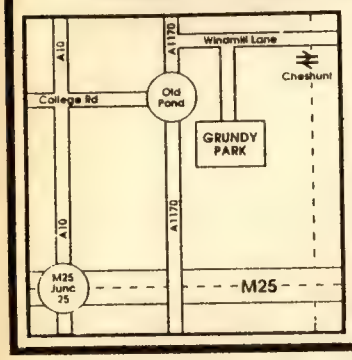

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Who's Who in British Comics

ALAN, C. (?-).
STRIPOGRAPHY
Chariots of Fear (in *Starblazer* 129, Sep 1984, art by Norman Lee)

ALAN, FORD. Pen-name of Mike Collins. [SH]
STRIPOGRAPHY
Action Force:
Gun Point (with Steve Cook, in *Action Force 28*, 12 Sep 1987, art by Anthony Williams)
Runaway Train (with Ian Rimmer, in *Action Force 32*, 10 Oct 1987, art by Anthony Williams)
Double Bluff (with Dan Abnett, in *Action Force Monthly 1*, Jun 1988, art by Dougie Braithwaite/Cam Smith)

ALAN, MICHAEL (?-). Possibly pseudonymous writer for Amalgamated Press.
STRIPOGRAPHY
Captain Blunt's Secret Mission (text story, in *Lion Annual 1955*, Sep 1954)
The Haunted Lagoon (text story, in *Lion Annual 1956*, Sep 1955)
Sam's Smoke Saves the Diamonds! (text story, in *Lion Annual 1961*, Sep 1960)

ALAN, RICHARD. Pen name of Richard Starkings. [SH]
STRIPOGRAPHY
Zoids:
(untitled stories) (in *Spiderman & Zoids 12*, 24 May 1986, art by Steve Parkhouse, 23-25, 9 Aug-23 Aug 1986, art by Kev Hopgood)
Getting Even (Steve Alan, in *Spiderman & Zoids 51*, 21 Feb 1987, art by John Ridgway)
Action Force:
Violent Lives (in *Action Force 35-36*, 31 Oct-7 Nov 1987, art by Bryan Hitch)
Coma (in *Action Force 39*, 28 Nov 1987, art by Geoff Senior)
Rage (in *Action Force 42*, 19 Dec 1987, art by Geoff Senior)
The Devil and the Deep Blue Sea (with Steve White, in *Action Force Monthly* 4, Sep 1988, art by Robin Smith)
The Real Ghostbusters (in *The Real Ghostbusters*, c1988)
Transformers:
Peace (in *Transformers Annual 1989*, 1988, art by Robin Smith)
Dr Who:
Time and Tide (with John Carnell, in *Dr Who Monthly 145-146*, Feb-Mar 1989, art by Dougie Braithwaite)
Nemesis of the Daleks (with John Tomlinson, in *Dr Who Monthly 152-155*, Sep-Dec 1989, art by Lee Sullivan)

ALAN, STEVE. Pen name of John Tomlinson. [SH]
STRIPOGRAPHY
The Paragon of Painthorpe Street (text story, in *Captain Britain Monthly 1-4*, Jan-Apr 1985, illus by Jeff Anderson)
Thicker Than Water (text story, in *Captain Britain Monthly* 9, Sep 1985, illus by Jeff Anderson)
Zoids:
All Our Yesterdays (in *Spiderman & Zoids 32-35*, 11 Oct-1 Nov 1986, art by Kev Hopgood 32, Hopgood/David Hine 33-35)
Getting Even (with Richard Alan, in *Spiderman & Zoids 51*, 21 Feb 1987, art by John Ridgway)
Thundercats:
World in Chaos 4: Friend or Foe? (with Simon Furman, in *Thundercats 32-33*, 17 Oct-24 Oct 1987, art by Bert Hill/Dave Harwood)
Footprints (with Ian Rimmer, in *Thundercats 41*, 26 Dec 1987, art by Dougie Braithwaite/Martin Griffiths)
Year of the Cat (in *Thundercats 60-63*, 7 May-28 May 1988, art by Elwood P. Davies/Stephen Baskerville)
Flight of the Netherwitch (in *Thundercats 64-65*, 4 Jun-11 Jun 1988, art by Art Wetherell/Robin Boutell)
Trial By Fire (in *Thundercats 76-78*, 27 Aug-10 Sep 1988, art by Edward P. Dowdes/Stephen Baskerville)
Country of the Blind (in *Thundercats 90-91*, 21 Jan-4 Feb 1989, art by Dougie Braithwaite/Stephen Baskerville)
Action Force:
Consequences: Prologue (in *Action Force 37*, 14 Nov 1987, art by Bryan Hitch/David Harwood)
Truth: Epilogue (in *Action Forcee 38*, 21 Nov 1987, art by Bryan Hitch/Dave Harwood)
Nuclear Winter (in *Action Force Monthly 8*, Jan 1989, art by Robin Smith)
Super Trooper (in *Action Force Monthly 12*, May 1989, art by Stuart Johnson)
The Prisoner (in *Action Force Monthly 13*, Jun 1989, art by Robin Smith)
Transformers: Destiny of the Dinobots (with Steve White, in *Transformers Annual 1990*, 1989, art by Andy Wildman)

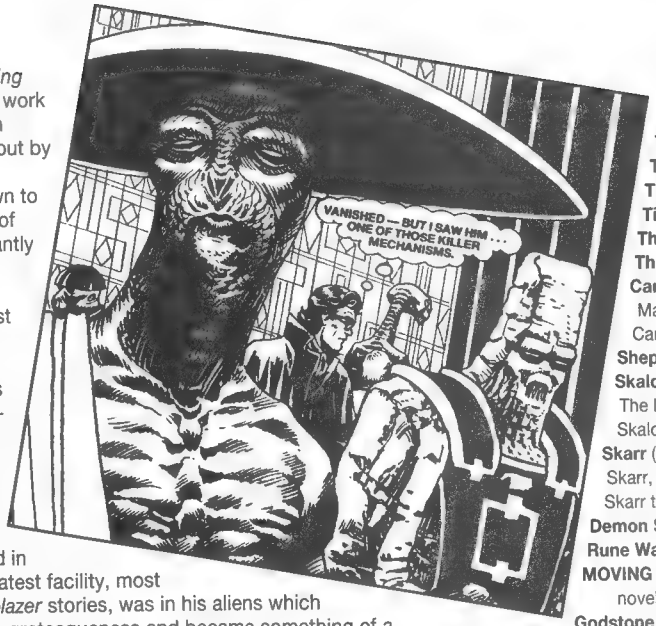
ALBERT. Artist of a number of Fleetway war stories in the early 1960s. [SH]
STRIPOGRAPHY
?The Thread of Life (in *Battle Picture Library 55*, Apr 1962)
The Unguarded Hour (in *War Picture Library 192*, May 1963)
Hold Until Relieved (in *Battle Picture Library 122*, Sep 1963, by Colin Thomas)
The Shadow of Fear (in *Battle Picture Library 139*, Jan 1964, by Leach)
Invasion (in *Battle Picture Library 163*, Jul 1964)

ALBERT, J. (?-).
STRIPOGRAPHY
The Secret of Soma (in *Starblazer 16*, Jan 1980, art by Sarompas)
Robot Rebellion (in *Starblazer 21*, Mar 1980, art by Keith Robson)
Avenging Angel (in *Starblazer 24*, May 1980, art by Alcatena)
Saber the Slayer (in *Starblazer 125*, Jul 1984, art by Alcatena)

ALCATENA, QUIQUE (c1957-). Writing in the introduction to *Moving Fortress*, Alcatena revealed "For as long as I can remember, comics have fascinated me. At thirty-one, that passion is still going strong." Born and raised in Buenos Aires, Argentina, he was exposed to a wide variety of comic strips ranging from Jack KIRBY, Barry WINDSOR-SMITH and Gil Kane, illustrators such as Rackham, Nielsen and Dulac, to Argentinian masters like Luis Olivera and Alberto and Enrique BRECCIA.

An English teacher and translator, he was able to read grand epics by Dunsany, MOORCOCK, Tolkein and Peake in their original language, the rich, fantastic imagery being influencial in his artwork. "For British, Italian and german publishing companies I have drawn adventures about pirates, Vikings, samurai's, and Aztecs, as well as sagas [set] in 19th Century London and Paris. But I prefer fantasy, fairy tales, and folklore - drawing gleaming cities full of sky-reaching minarets, where sorcerers steeped in dark wisdom pray to mysterious gods; dreamy landscapes haunted by magic and derring-do..."

Alcatena is also a prolific artist which has allowed him to draw widely: he drew horror stories for Bastei (Germany), and sprawling fantasies in his native Argentina, of which only *Fortress Movil* and *El Mundo Subterranea* (from



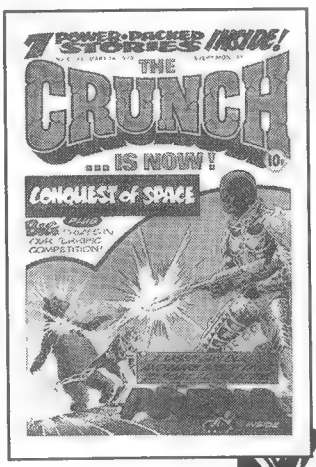
Skorpio), has been translated - as *Moving Fortress* (1988). His work for D.C. Thomson in Britain was sought out by fans long before his name became known to even a few outside of his publishers, instantly recognisable for Alcatena's densely hatched style. Whilst his figurework was often static and his mechanical designs for robots and high-tech gadgetry are curiously antique, this was more than made up for the imaginative designs to be found in every page; his greatest facility, most notable in his *Starblazer* stories, was in his aliens which have a Giger-esque grotesqueness and became something of a trademark. Fellow *Starblazer* artist, Tony O'DONNELL, has noted that they often appeared in scenes of spaceships speeding through the cosmos, often dominating the panel and demanding some editorial caption writing to explain them - usually as mystified guardians of space or "unseen watchers".

He has attracted some attention in the United States in recent years, championed by Timothy Truman whom he inked of *Hawkworld.* Latterly he has worked for Dark Horse, Marvel, and DC, for whom he is currently drawing another Batman story. [SH]

>"Starblazer" by Tony O'Donnell (in *Fusion #9*, Feb 1987).

STRIPOGRAPHY

Arena (in *The Crunch 1-54*, 20 Jan 1979-26 Jan 1980)
Holocaust Hogan (in *Starblazer 7*, Aug 1979, by Mike Knowles)
The Secret of Soma (in *Starblazer 16*, Jan 1980, by J. Albert)
Starhawk (in *Hotspur 1069,1095,1100,1102*, 12 Apr 1980, 11 Oct 1980, 15 Nov 1980, 29 Nov 1980)
Avenging Angel (in *Starblazer 24*, May 1980, by J. Albert)
The Doom Wardens (in *Hotspur 1072-1083*, 3 May-19 Jul 1980)
The Moonstealers (in *Starblazer 29*, Jul 1980, by W. Webb)
Starstrike (in *Starblazer 31*, Aug 1980, by Ray Aspden)
The Machine Master (in *Starblazer 32*, Sep 1980, by M. Chamberlin)
Deathship (in *Starblazer 36*, Nov 1980, by S. Neeld)
Mikal Kayn:
Operation Overkill (in *Starblazer 45*, Mar 1981, by Grant Morrison)
The Death Reaper (in *Starblazer 127*, Aug 1984, by Grant Morrison)
Mind Bender (in *Starblazer 167*, Apr 1986, by Grant Morrison)
The Midas Mystery (in *Starblazer 177*, Sep 1986, by Grant Morrison)
Nether World (in *Starblazer 199*, Aug 1987, by Alan Hemus)
Citizen Kayn (in *Starblazer 207*, Dec 1987, by W. Corderoy)
Till Death Do Us Part (in *Starblazer 219*, Jun 1988, by Alan Hemus)
The Andromeda Incident (in *Starblazer 47*, Apr 1981, by Colin Shelbourn)
Rigel Express (in *Starblazer 49*, May 1981, by W. Reed)
Hadron Halley (by Ray Aspden):
The Torturer of Triton II (in *Starblazer 54*, Aug 1981)
Terror Tomb (in *Starblazer 62*, Dec 1981)
Fortress of Fear (in *Starblazer 77*, Jul 1982)
The Serpents of Sirius (in *Starblazer 81*, Sep 1982)
The Sleeping Legion (in *Starblazer 56*, Sep 1981, by S. Neeld)
Starseeker Squad (in *Starblazer 59*, Oct 1981, by W. Reed)
The Exterminator (in *Starblazer 64*, Jan 1982, by Mike Chinn)
The Pirates of Kalor (in *Starblazer 66*, Feb 1982, by J. Speer)
Steve Martin (by W. Reed):
Doomrock (in *Starblazer 75*, Jun 1982)
The D-Team (in *Starblazer 162*, Feb 1986)
The Rule of Rogat (in *Victor 1116-1131*, 10 Jul-23 Oct 1982)
Invaders From the Black Star (in *Starblazer 87*, Dec 1982, by Ray Aspden)
Terror Planet (in *Starblazer 88*, Jan 1983, by M. Stall)
Jasper Sly (in *Buddy 103-113*, 5 Feb-9 Apr 1983, by David Motton)
Sabor's Army (in *Warlord 451-466*, 14 May-27 Aug 1983)
Midshipman Coward (in *Buddy 124-129*, 25 Jun-30 Jul 1983, by Peter Harris/ in Spike 52-62, 14 Jan-24 Mar 1984)
The Stone Men (in *Starblazer 113*, Jan 1984, by M. Gorton)
The Sinister Mr. Pendragon (in *Champ*, various episodes from 25 Feb 1984)
Branded! (in *Victor 1211-1226*, 5 May-18 Aug 1984)
Alien Invasion (in *Starblazer 122*, Jun 1984, by W. Reed)
Saber the Slayer (in *Starblazer 125*, Jul 1984, by J. Albert)
Spaceroamer (in *Starblazer 141*, Mar 1985, by Mike Chinn)
The Sail Fighters From Sol 7 (in *Starblazer 144*, May 1985, by R.H. Bonsall)
Deadly Pilgrimage (in *Starblazer 149*, Jul 1985, by Malcolm Furnass)
Fighting Tom Cochrane:
(first series) (in *Victor 1284-1299*, 28 Sep 1985-11 Jan 1986)
(second series) (in *Victor 1338-1351*, 11 Oct 1986-10 Jan 1987)
(third series) (in *Victor 1456-1472*, 14 Jan-6 May 1989)
The Suicide Squad (in *Starblazer 154*, Oct 1985, by W. Reed)
The Seeds of Madness (in *Starblazer 161*, Jan 1986, by N. Jordan)
The Clone Ranger (in *Starblazer 166*, Apr 1986, by Ray Aspden)
Timeslay (in *Starblazer 168*, May 1986, by John Smith)
The Lasersword (in *Starblazer 170*, Jun 1986, by Ray Aspden)
The Black Lord (in *Starblazer 175*, Aug 1986, by Mike Knowles)
Carter:
Mandroid (in *Starblazer 179*, Oct 1986, by Mike Knowles)
Carter Breaks Loose (in *Starblazer 260*, Mar 1990, by Alan Hemus)
Sheppards Flock (in *Victor 1346-1359*, 6 Dec 1986-7 Mar 1987)
Skald (by Alan Hemus):
The Power of the Warlocks (in *Starblazer 190*, Apr 1987)
Skald - the Ultimate Conflict (in *Starblazer 274*, Oct 1990)
Skarr (by W. Corderoy):
Skarr, Warrior of the Norlands (in *Starblazer 196*, Jul 1987)
Skarr the Soldier (in *Starblazer 213*, Mar 1988)
Demon Sword (in *Starblazer 200*, Sep 1987, by Mike Chinn)
Rune War (in *Starblazer 224*, Sep 1988, by Mike Chinn)
MOVING FORTRESS (reprints "La Fortress Movil" from *Skorpio* (Argentina), graphic novel, 4-Winds (USA), Nov 1988, by Ricardo Barreiro)
Godstone (in *Starblazer 231*, Dec 1988, by Mike Chinn)
Tower of Skulls (in *Starblazer 233*, Jan 1989, by Adrian Cole)
Slayer in the Mist (in Starblazer 240, May 1989, by Martin Gately)
Hawkworld (in *Hawkworld 1-3*, Jun-Aug 1989, by Tim Truman. Pencils by Truman)
John One (in *Victor 1485-1494*, 5 Aug-7 Oct 1989)
Sun Prince (in *Starblazer 250*, Oct 1989, by Mike Chinn)
Cobra (in *Starblazer 262*, Apr 1990, by Dave H. Taylor)
Space Ship Hercules (in *Victor 1527-1538*, 26 May-11 Aug 1990)
The Triune Warrior (in *Starblazer 271*, Aug 1990)
Alpha (in *Starblazer 276*, Nov 1990, by Mike Knowles)
Space Pirate (in *Victor 1570-1581*, 23 Mar-8 Jun 1991)
Makabre (in *Toxic! 7-11,16-18*, 9 May-6 Jun 1991, 11 Jul-25 Jul 1991, by Alan Grant; reprinted in Apocalypse Presents, Oct 1991)
The Spider (adapted from the novels of Grant Stockbridge by Tim Truman):
(in *The Spider 1-3*, Jun-Oct 1991)
Reign of the Vampire King (in *The Spider: Reign of the Vampire King 1-3*, 1992)
Star Seekers:
(First series) (in *Victor 1582-1588*, 15 Jun-27 Jul 1991)
(Second series) (in *Victor 1611-1618*, 4 Jan-22 Feb 1992)
(Third series) (in *Victor 1632-1635*, 30 May-20 Jun 1992)
Space Bus (in *Victor 1653-1657*, 24 Oct-21 Nov 1992)
Predator: The Pride of Nghasa (in *Dark Horse Comics 10-12*, May-Aug 1993, by Chuck Dixon; reprinted in *Predator: Jungle Tales*, 1995)
Alien Legion:
(in *Heavy Hitters Annual 1*, Nov 1993, by Carl Potts)
(in *Alien Legion: Binary Deep 1*, Oct 1993, by Chuck Dixon)
Pinhead (in *Pinhrad 4*, 1994, by Dan Chichester. Pencils by Dario Carrasco, Jr.)
Batman: (in *Batman Annual 7*, 1994, by Chuck Dixon)
Fantastic Four (based on the TV cartoon series, in *Marvel Action Hour: Fantastic Four 1-8*, Nov 1994-Jun 1985, by Joey Cavalieri)



I PERCEIVE A MOUNTING SURGE OF ENERGY WITHIN THAT PRIMITIVE CRAFT. ITS DESTRUCTION IS IMMINENT. WE MUST WITHDRAW!
NO! WAIT! THERE IS A LIFE SIGN WITHIN.

All art by Alcatena. Clockwise from below - Rogue Cop (*Starblazer #212*), Scar the Soldier (*Starblazer #213*), Till Death do us Part (*Starblazer #219*), ditto, Arena (*The Crunch*, Feb 24 1979). All art © D.C. Thomson & Co.

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Richard Hill's REVIEWS

The next time you're loitering with intent to browse in a favourite bookshop, take a look around at the company you're keeping. You'll probably find a splendid mix of ages young and old, of genders make, female and intermediate - from all highways of life they come, to leaf through and buy books. This, my comrade in the comic fraternity, is what is known as 'the general public'.

The fact that you see few of these people in your favourite comic shop and that Marvel is choosing to distribute its own comics are not unrelated. The move has left publishers and distributors, retailers and readers, bobbing in its wake, trying to work out what will happen next and which way they should swim to shore. It's likely to have a profound effect on the whole comics industry, from other publishers through to shops and readers. We live in fascinating if worrying times. But while it matters to Marvel to have its performance in the comic shop in good shape, its sights are ultimately set elsewhere.

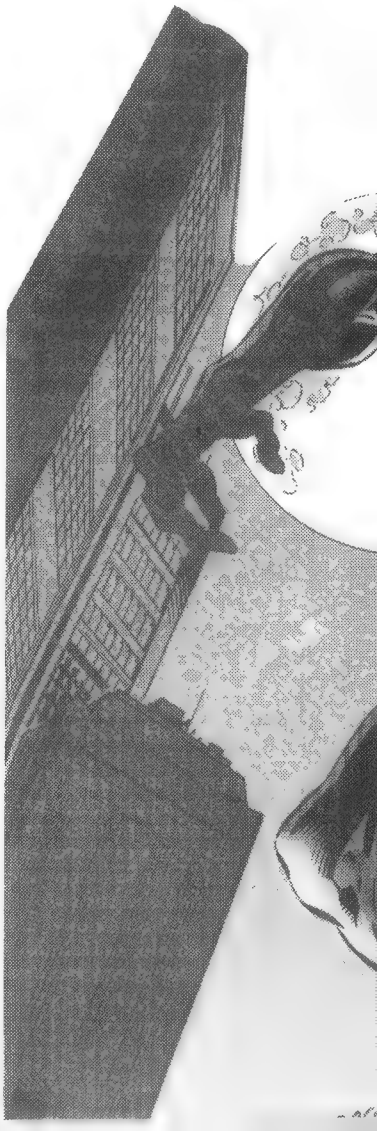
Marvel's eyes are cast longingly towards the bookshops where the general public go - and the video stores and record emporiums doing nicely selling computer games and *Star Trek* alongside their CDs. Marvel's eyes light up at the thought of *Spider-Man* films igniting sales of animated videos and beat-'em-ups on the Super Nintendo. And it isn't going to achieve this on the scale it wants and needs to without looking beyond the comic shop. That's assuming it can achieve its aim. For there's a flaw in Marvel's grand plan to court the general public - and the flaw is that when all is said and done, its stories are crap. And stories are what it needs if it's going to hold the public's interest. Any idiot can throw enough money into advertising to hype its product into selling - it's keeping the people coming back for more that's the trick.

Most Marvel comics, the base upon which its empire of merchandising is to be built, are poorly constructed, hurriedly drawn rubbish. The company instead has to rely on an adolescent marketing technique that may work in the peculiar confines of the comic shop, but has barely made a ripple outside.

The recent trimming down of the giant range of comics Marvel publishes will mean less rubbish, but won't automatically make what's left any better. What it does mean is more attention can be lavished on selling the Spider-Man titles, for example. But I can't believe many more people will be impressed by these comics' blend of gimmick covers and desperate plots. The way to get more people reading Spider-Man is right under Marvel's noses in the form of **Amazing Spider-Man #400** (Marvel, $2.95), which bids farewell to May Parker - 'Aunt' May to generations of readers. We've been expecting the old girl to pop her clogs for so long now that it's a shock to finally see it. For all its cliches and melodramatic distractions, May's exit is a winningly sentimental, old-fashioned tale about the relationships between characters the reader cares about. The people in charge will probably think it's the gimmick cover that sold the issue and push for an Aunt May clone story before you know it.

The just-ending *X-Men* crossover highlights the way Marvel eschews plot and clarity in favour of tinkering with continuity. None of this is going to make sense to casual readers, much less get them excited about what happens next or arguing over ideas with their friends in the way everyone's been talking about *Disclosure* recently.

The problem of clarity is easily



solved by using writers, artists and editors who know about storytelling. In **Godwheel #3** (Malibu Ultraverse, $2.50), you can jump straight in and understand why all these weird guys are fighting each other. In the last chapter, George Perez takes over the art, Thor jumps into the Ultraverse in the verily manner possible and suddenly it's the 1980s again. The

YOU'VE NEVER BEEN VERY GOOD...AT LETTING GO, PETER. LOSING YOUR PARENTS THE WAY YOU DID, MADE IT SO HARD FOR YOU.
NO, AUNT MAY--
YES, BUT NOT ALL LEAVE-TAKING IS BAD. I'VE HAD A GOOD LIFE. A LONG LIFE.
BUT I'M TIRED, PETER. IT'S MY TIME.

basic storytelling values Jim Shooter hammered home then have been forgotten by Marvel, but adopted more recently by Malibu, to telling effect. The only response Marvel had was to buy the company.

The lack of compelling stories and ideas is a harder problem to solve, but crucial if Marvel and the rest of the comics industry are to win over a wider readership. The means to success are right in the hands of the companies. The writers and artists it's using right now should be free to create, to tell the stories they really want to tell. Some will choose to produce the same tired, confusing material they were doing anyway. But enough will follow the example of artist David Lapham to make a difference.

The last major series he worked on was *Warriors of Plasm*, a garish mess created, ironically, by Jim Shooter (a case of forgetting more that some will ever know?). Left to his own devices, Lapham's come up with **Stray Bullets #1** (El Capitan, $2.95), a tight, brutal tragedy that lurks in the memory long after it's finished. Tarantino and Scorsese devotees would lap it up, but in today's market, Lapham's had to self-publish and no-one will know it exists.

Self-publishing is the part of the industry that understands best how to sell comics, but hasn't the resources to do it properly. When are larger publishers going to realise that they could be supporting work with the splendid variety of *Stray Bullets, Bone* or *Strangers in Paradise*, all of which should be in the mainstream of comics making a fortune? The comics industry can succeed like never before simply by promoting good, well-packaged stories. Is it really that difficult to grasp that this approach is going to reach thousands more people than churning out variations on a theme few give a damn about in the first place? CW

Review copies courtesy of Bristol's Forever People (telephone 0117 926 5454). Prices are given in dollars; the sterling price may vary from shop to shop.

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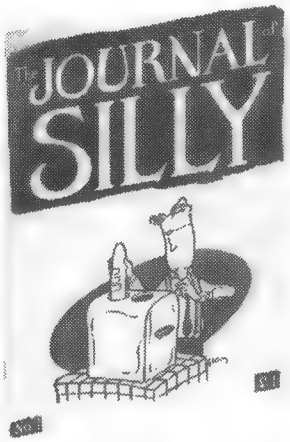

Spring is upon us once again and like the lovely daffodils, a flood of new small press comics have found their way above ground. Isn't nature wonderful?

In keeping with the season, **The Journal Of Silly** is a lively and energetic collection of cartoons from a variety of editorial cartoonists. What's stimulating is that this group of professionals have decided to self publish to get their work collected. Long live the freedom of small press! The range of cartoons is quirky and often surreal - no political stuff here and features art from Ham Khan, Simon Bond, John Landers and Knife. Send £1.00 plus an A5 SAE to Duncan McCoshan, 1 Cholmely Lodge, Cholmely Park, London, N6 5EN.

Sin City fans would be well advised to send for **Pigeon City**, an extremely accomplished take off of their favourite series. Now I don't tend to read such mainstream stuff, but from what I can see, Chris Low has captured the feel of Miller's artwork very well indeed. This *noir* parody is short but sweet and great fun. You can get a mini comic version for a first class stamp or the A6 version for two second class stamps (whatta give-away), from Chris Low, 137 Moulsecoomb Way, Brighton, BN2 4PE.

In a panel discussion I attended a few nights ago, Dave McKean mentioned how few people were producing work using photography. Well, he should check out **Turn #2** and so should you. Here you will find an unusual photo strip from a chap called Reubs, as far removed from those in *Just Seventeen!* magazine as McKean's work is. You'll also get strips from Phil Elliot, Darryl Cunningham and G.N. Reid. This is a tight collection of work and a good addition to the variety of small press anthologies available. Send 50p (post included) to R. Willmott, 19 Melbourne Road, Ipswich, IP4 5PP.

Dead Fly Pie sounds like a shlock horror title, but this anthology presents a startlingly original collection of strips to make your skin crawl. None of them are what you might call horror strips, but they all have an unnerving quality that worked for me. Nic Watts' strip 'Puddleboy' is particularly recommended, his artwork is like none other that I've seen and reminds me of the clown in Stephen

King's *It*. I really enjoyed this and if you enjoy spooky stuff, send £1.00 and an A4 SAE to S. Banfield, PO Box 4791, Plumstead, London, SE18 1 PQ.

A quick diversion from comics for a moment brings us to **Squall**, perhaps the most important political magazine about. *Squall* has no particular agenda, instead concentrating on news and information regarding squatters/travellers rights, the Criminal Justice Act, green issues and freedom from civil injustice. Eminently sensible, the magazine doesn't aim to shock, simply to expose the worst excesses of the system. If you have the slightest interest in the way society is headed, *Squall* will open your eyes to some scary home truths. Send 1.30 (more if possible) to Squall c/o 2 St Pauls Road, London, N1 2QN.

It's nice to see someone's first 'zine turn out as well as **Soft** by Sarah Gunn. The two stories in here are retellings of classic fairytales - the Gingerbread House uses text from Robert Coover's book based on Hansel & Gretel and Sarah has also adapted Lewis Carrol's Alice stories. Simply illustrated in a clean fine line style, with spot colour and glued in feathers(!), this is a relaxing read which recaptures the magic of such stories. Also featuring a lolly and a cup of tea on the back, this eclectic comic will appeal to those of refined tastes. Send a pound and an A5 SAE to Sarah Gunn, 37 Haldon Road, Exeter, EX4 4DZ.

Sin will appeal to those of you who pin Tank Girl posters on your walls and read comics like Vamps or Lady Death; yup, it's a lighthearted bit of froth featuring a nubile young lass who kicks ass. Now there are lots of such comics about and you have to be a bit good to escape the masses - this just about manages it. It's well drawn and has an interesting plot about a demon too bad for Hell. At the end of the day though, it's another babe comic, so I guess that you'll all be snapping it up; issues 1 & 2 are available from Darren Powell for 75p each plus an A5 SAE to 5 Green Lane, Upper Gornal, Dudley, DY3 1XG.

Pod marks the return of one of the most imitated small press artists about - Ralph Kidson. This comic doesn't feature Ralph's trademark 'Captain Dolphin' (though there is a small pastiche by Richard 'Teenage Suicide' Smith), instead this is a true story from the pen of the aforementioned Mr Smith about a particularly nasty relationship break up. This comic shows that Ralph's simple style has the strength to carry a serious comic as well as the hilarious dolphin stuff. Top marks to these two and someone called J. Kirby who is credited with having done the inking (?!). Send some money (didn't say how much - I'd advise a pound or so) plus an A5 SAE to R. Kidson, 3 Langridges Close, Newick, E Sussex, BN8 4LZ.

The second issue of **Grit** from the London Cartoon Centre is out now and it hangs together a little more cohesively than the first. No theme to this issue. so the strips range from the comic 'Reverend Saucy' to a story about a mysterious nose picker. Best of the bunch for me though is a superbly illustrated strip about alien hunters using the Somme as a killing field - simple, but great stuff. Send your cash, £1.00 of it, plus a large SAE to Tony Hershel or Michael Moog, c/o London Cartoon Centre, 14 Conlan Street, London, W10 5AR.

Fresh from Hove, bustling centre of the universe is **Palmolive Square**, produced by Cool Cheese. The first true soap opera in a comic, the first issue sets up the characters and follows their exploits on New Years Eve. Featuring all the typical soap stereotypes including a medallion toting Mike Reid character, the story also manages to capture Hove's inimitable charms! The most outstanding features of this comic are Cool Cheese's fresh and original artwork and the incredible printing - a mixture of dark purple and flesh tone. *Palmolive Square* is a great achievement in self publishing and deserves a wide audience. It'll cost you £1.20 plus an A5 SAE c/o Girl Frenzy, PO Box 148, Hove, BN3 3DQ.

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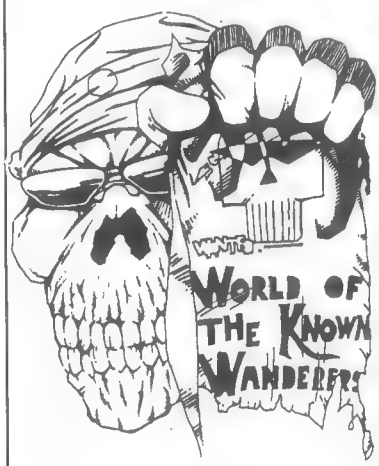

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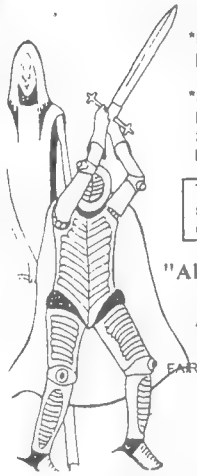

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Ash, Sarah ***Moths to a Flame***. Millennium, £15.99 (hc). High fantasy first novel about the fall of the House of Memizhon in the wondrous Myn-Dhiel, a rich, gothic, stagnant land, corrupt and subject to the growing madness of the Arkhan and his Arkhys.

Blythe, Daniel ***Dr Who: Infinite Requiem.*** Dr Who, £4.99. The Doctor and Bernice face the Senopath, able to unleash their collective unconsciousness on the physical world.

Egan, Greg ***Axiomatic***. Millennium, £15.99 (hc). Short story collection by the author of the well-received Permutation City. Most previously appeared in Interzone where he has twice won the Best Story of the Year.

Hambly, Barbara ***Star Wars: Children of the Jedi.*** Bantam, £10.99 (hc). Princess Leia, Han Solo and Chewbacca set out on a mission vital for the survival of the fragile New Republic - the search for the long-lost children of the Jedi. Far across the galaxy, Luke has his own problems, trying to destroy a sentient Dreadnought war machine.

Hoffman, Nina Kiriki ***The Thread That Binds the Bones.*** Raven, £4.99. A school janitor, Tom Renfield, can speak to ghosts, soar through the air and transform people into birds. Laura Bolte is the rebellious daughter of an ancient family with dark intentions. WHat happens when the two meet and marry? This was Hoffman's first full-length work for which she took the Bram Stoker Award for Best First Novel.

Janes, Phil I, ***Arnold.*** Millennium, £15.99 (hc). Third in the hilarious 'Galaxy Game' series, Arnold the Android here gives full rein to his megalomania by running for President. Robots are just part of the problem in an idiot circus full of stroppy aliens, homicidal maniacs, and superbeings.

Jones, Gwyneth ***Northwind***. Gollancz, £5.99. Second in the 'Aleutian Invasion' series wherein aliens have taken over and put women in power. Gender-wars are only part of the problem for Sidney Carton who has become embroiled in a three-way, two-species loving the alien affair.

Leonard, Paul ***Dr Who: Dancing the Code.*** Dr Who, £4.99. In a 'missing adventure' for Jon Pertwee, the Doctor builds a machine to predict the future for himself and Jo, only to see themselves shot by the Brigadier. The two separate to stop the prediction coming true and Jo soon finds herself in North Africa - in a Kebirian prison. Meanwhile, the Doctor and UNIT discover an alien infestation that threatens to overrun the world.

Lyons, Steve ***Dr Who: Time of Your Life.*** Dr Who, £4.99. The latest 'missing adventure' stars Colin Baker - thankfully not being ignored in the books as he was on the screen - visiting the Meson system where he faces random murders, kidnappings and a lethal new gameshow.

Mann, Phillip ***A Land Fit for Heroes: Stand Alone Stan***. Gollancz, £5.99. Follow-up to Escape to the Wild Wood, a alternative world where the Romans were never driven out of Britain, and a man can walk from the city of Eburacum (York) to the south coast without leaving the shade of the forest.

May, Julian ***Diamond Mask***. Pan, £5.99. Dorothea Macdonald is possessed by extraordinary metapsychic powers, finding herself a linch-pin in the schemes of the Fury, who seek to drive a wedge between humans and the Milieu. When she later meets Jack the Bodiless, she realises theirs is the power that will stop the rebellion.

McIntee, David A. ***Sanctuary***. Dr Who, £4.99. Caught in the gravitational field of a dark star, the Doctor and Bernice are forced to jump ship (or TARDIS) and find themselves in the middle ages, on different sides of the Albigesian crusades.

Niven, Larry, Jerry Pournelle & Steven Barnes ***The Dragons of Heorot.*** Gollancz, £16.99 (hc). Sequel to *The Legacy of Heorot* set twenty years on with the colonists of Avalon living in a flourishing community away from the mainlands where humans and the deadly reptilian locals - grendels - lived. But worse follows when the colony discovers that the grendels have their own predator.

Relowinski, Leah ***Star Wreck 6***: Geek Space Nine. Boxtree, £3.99. An epidemic of mass boredom hits Geek Space Nine, a cash drain folly owned by Starfreak Command desperate for money, driving away all the tourists. Smirk and Picardo are sent to the Gummi-Quadrant wormhole to try and stop the tourist-leak.

Relowinski, ***Leah Star Wreck 7: Space: The Fido Frontier.*** Boxtree, £3.99. The chase is on to find Laika, the first dog in space.

Sky, Kathleen ***Star Trek: Vulcan!.*** Titan, £4.50. An ion storm is helping to shift the balance of power between Romulans and the

Media

Federation. The Enterprise is sent to the planet Arachnae; on board is Dr Katalya Tremain an expert on the region's biology, but an inveterate hater of Vulcan's, which makes for an explosive situation when the only way to save Spock from an alien domination is for her to mind-meld with him.

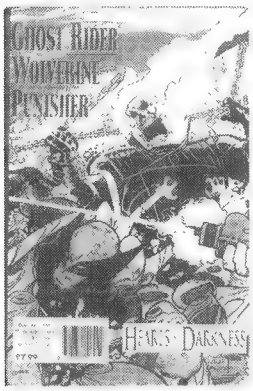
Sutherland, John & Nigel Gross ***Street Fighter II: Dragon's Breath***. Boxtree, £3.99. Van Damme's movie should be out mid-May, so this is a timely tie-in. The first features Chun-Li in search of the worlds most evil Warlord, Bison, who murdered her father.

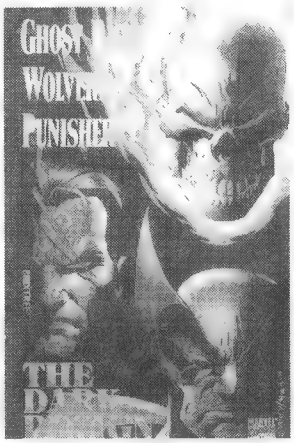
Sutherland, John & Nigel Gross ***Street Fighter II: Yak Attack***. Boxtree, £3.99. Shotokan warrior Ryu takes centre stage when a young boy is put into hospital, poisoned by Bison's Shadowlaw. Ryu decides the Yakuza have had it their own way for too long.

Whitbourn, John ***To Build Jerusalem.*** Gollancz, £5.99. Dark fantasy set in the same alternate world as *A Dangerous Energy*, where magic is common, but here has ceased to work in its accustomed way. Instability and unrest threaten the world, the King of England vanishes and the Pope is forced to send in an investigator.

Wright, T.M. ***Sleepeasy***. Gollancz, £4.99. Harry Brigg is a regular guy who believes in everlasting love. He cannot imagine life without his beautiful wife, Barbara - until his fatal swimming accident. The two meet up again in the supernatural limbo called Silver Lake where Harry is now a detective on the trail of a mad killer who doesn't confine himself to the realms of the dead.

GRAPHIC NOVELS





Ghost Rider/Wolverine/Punisher: The Dark Design, by Howard Mackie, Ron Garney & Al Milgrom. Boxtree, £7.99. Actually a flip-book story - you should read *Hearts of Darkness* by Mackie, John Romita Jr. & Klaus Janson - first. It's the better of the two stories, although both pack a (literal) punch. The most noticable difference between the two, in fact, is the richness of colouring on *The Dark Design*. Not a patch on fully painted work, but Comicraft certainly deserve a tip of the hat.

Judge Dredd: The Complete Apocalypse War, by John Wagner, Alan Grant & Carlos Ezquerra. Titan, £10.99. Ah, was it really thirteen years ago that East-Meg One began the war to end all wars? Read through again, the story remains remarkably clear in my memory - powerful and compelling and one of the pivotal stories in the history of Dredd and Mega-City One, the death of 400 million of its citizens. The original ran six months in 2000AD and was a must-read; the collection is gripping,

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and adds the prequel - 'Block Mania' with art by Mike McMahon, Ron Smith, Steve Dillon and Brian Bolland. Recommended? Too right!

Sabretooth: Death Hunt by Larry Hama & Mark Texeira. Boxtree, £6.99. Surely this has to be the single most politically incorrect book ever put together. But where, say, a 'Big Dave' story is played for laughs, Sabretooth takes himself oh so seriously, punching his colleague/girl friday, Birdy, in the face for no real reason, ripping into anything that moves and relishing every rip, every mutilation, and every pain he inflicts or receives. This is unrelentingly nasty, and only for fans of Texeira's gonzo punk artstyle and if you think you face the sight of Sabretooth cutting his own chest open without anaesthetic for a little light surgery.

Spider-Man: Revenge of the Sinister Six, by Erik Larsen. Boxtree, £8.99. Hyped up to take over the *Spider-Man* title by Marvel, Larsen was sold to comic buying kids as the next New God after Todd McFarlane, and the erosion of storytelling in comics continued. They're pin-up artists, kings of the impossible pose. They're as deep as the ink is on the page and no deeper. And the dialogue: Doc Oc expounds upon his new adamantium arms: "Finally after seemingly endless searching they're mine again..." It's so stilted it's a struggle to get through.

Wonder Woman: The Contest by

THE TRUTH IS OUT THERE

PETE TAYLOR TAKES A LOOK AT THE PHENOMENALLY POPULAR X-FILES

"It looks like World War III is here I hope not - but we must meet whatever comes - and we will." wrote United States President Truman in his diary on December 6, 1950, when he learned that interceptors were being scrambled to deal with unidentified aircraft that had been spotted in the vicinity of Limestone, Maine. At 10.40am the sighting was confirmed when 40 planes were tracked by radar.

The High Alert was later attributed to an "atmospheric disturbance."

On the same day a National Emergency was almost declared when a formation of planes was spotted over Alaska. Officially, the UFO sighting was actually a flock of geese.

Deception? Misdirection? UFOlogists are convinced that an unidentified flying object flamed down over El Indio on the Texas-Mexico border that day. A co-incidence? A hoax? A mistake?

A cover-up?

I love conspiracy. I strongly believe that facts are being kept from us by our governments. I want to know what is so frightening that my government thinks I cannot handle it. Too much of it, I fear, is neither inexplicable or extraterrestrial. Too much of it is all too human, about greed and about money, about deals that are struck daily which, if revealed, would disgust the public. But I love conspiracy theory, and that makes me susceptible to a programme like *The X Files*.

The truth, says Fox Mulder, is out there. "When convention and science offer us no answers might we not finally turn to the fantastic as a plausibility?"

People have been turning to the fantastic in increasing numbers since the programme first aired in the USA in September 1993. The show regularly appears in the top 30 Nielsen ratings, and in the UK over six million have watched the show on BBC2. Sky are already running the second series, and Fox are about to release the first 4 episodes on video. You will have no excuse for *not* having seen at least one show.

The show has 'cult' built into its DNA, the entwined double-strand here being the relationship between Fox Mulder, the Oxford educated FBI agent obsessed with examining cases that involve unexplained phenomena, and Dana Scully, a tough-as-nails, resourceful ex-medical and physics graduate whose response to Mulder's plea for open-mindedness is: "What I find 'fantastic' is any notion that there are any answers beyond the realm of science. The answers are there - you just have to know where to look."

How she can remain so cynical throughout the series is a problem her writers have solved with varying degrees of ingenuity, from outright ignoring her own eyes to being knocked unconscious just at the vital moment. Her deliberation and methodical approach are the counterweight to her partners rushing in where angels should fear to tread and. it's the same annoyance you might feel at a Christmas panto. however often you scream 'Behind you,' she turns just as the monster ducks back down and looks back to you with a weary shrug. But to have her know the truth would destroy the show's *raison d'etre*, extinguish the sparks that develop in the dialogue and scupper the frison between the two characters.

The first four shows are going to be widely available shortly, three of the stories are UFO conspiracy episodes, neatly introducing Mulder (never 'Fox' - not even to his mother) as the basement-dwelling X-File operative at the FBI HQ in Washington DC. Sent on the surface to assist him, Dana Scully has the agenda of keeping the

William Messner-Loebs & Mike Deodato Jr. Titan Books. Wonder Woman has always been the back-runner of DC's big three, which is a shame because for the past eight years a lot of care has been taken to create stories with a difference and the current (above) line-up which is taking WW to issue #100 is the strongest yet. The collection of issues 90-93 + 0 takes the story back to basics and a rematch of the contest won by Diana to be Wonder Woman...which she loses. Deodato's love for Amazonian women in impossible bikinis is obvious. The original Brian Bolland covers are another welcome bonus.

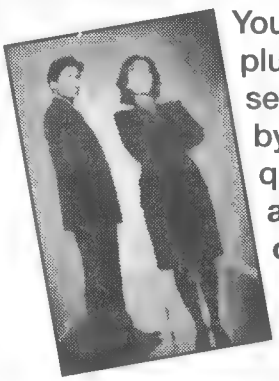
investigations by the book and down to Earth; when there are no facts to confront, she falls on the side of the yet-unexplained by science rather than the easily explained by science fiction. Mulder, we discover, is driven by the disappearance of his 8-year-old sister from her bed when he was only 12. Through regressive hypnosis he learns that there were presences in the room they shared that night, that he was paralysed and unable to do anything. He *knows* we are not alone, and many of the first season's 24 episodes were concerned with that fact, sometimes to the point of *Yes, we've seen this one before*. Often the best episodes are those that confront other phenomena: in 'Ice', an effective (if uncredited) reworking of John W. Campbell's 'Who Goes There' (filmed as *The Thing*) the tension comes from the claustrophobic atmosphere as Mulder, Scully and a small team - one of them infected by a madness inducing bug - are trapped in a research station in the arctic; the two stories featuring the serial killer Eugene Tooms - a genetic mutation who kills five victims for their livers every thirty years - pushes Mulder against the system more effectively than any number of UFO cover-up plots, although direct contact shows ('Space', 'Fallen Angel', and 'Genderbender' for example) can generate excitement and remain plausible...if you believe in that kind of thing...

For us terrestrial dwellers without a satellite dish, we'll have to wait until the autumn for Season Two although reports on the early shows say that the show coped remarkably well with Gillian (Scully) Anderson's pregnancy by having her disappear, leaving David Duchovny's Mulder to wonder if she was 'Out There'. In East Anglia episode 23 remains unseen as both BBC stations went off the air for four hours. Even a direct question to BBC's Head Office *why* this happened elicited nothing more than a 'We'll get back to you,' response. No-one got back.

What are they hiding? CW

X-Files flash: the X-Files bulletin board can be contacted on usenet.alt.tv.x-files. The first X-Files novel by Charles E. Grant should be published in the UK shortly. The comic from Manga Publishing is launched May 4.

The X-Files Video COMPETITION



You can join the 6 million plus viewers who have seen The X-Files in Britain by answering this simple question: **David Duchovny appeared in another classic cult TV series as a gender bending detective. Name the series** and send your answers to X-File Competition, Comic World, Castle House, 97 High Street, Colchester, Essex, CO1 1TH. Entries must be in by May 19. Usual competition rules apply.

FILMS

Producers Ed Pressman (*Judge Dredd*) and John Singleton have announced plans for **Luke Cage** which will be executively produced by Bradford Smith from a screenplay by Joe Doughrity. Other Pressman projects include a sequel to **The Crow**, to be directed by Tim Pope, and an animated adaptation of **Elfquest** by Jeremiah Chechik.

Pamela (*Baywatch*) Anderson has been signed as **Barb Wire,** based on the Dark Horse comic and to be co-produced by Propoganda Films and Dark Horse Entertainment. The budget is set at $8m.

ManSlayer is due to start shooting on April 15. Based on Jay R Bonaninga's novel, *The Black Mariah*, the story concerns a female psychiatrist who morphs into a comic book character. The $6.5m film is to be produced by Steven Menkin & Stuart S Shapiro.

Trouble at Carolco could mean more delays for James Cameron's **Spider-Man.** The French company Canal Plus who have helped bankroll the ailing Carolco's recent films, **Showgirls** and **Cutthroat Island** have pulled out. However, the Korean electronics firm Samsung and the french conglomerate Chargeurs may step in. Cameron's Lightstorm Productions remains attached to the film.

Arnold Schwarzenegger has finally announced his next film, an action thriller entitled **Eraser** with Chuck (*The Mask*) Russell directing for Warner Bros. Arnie has still to make a decision on the pirate pic **Captain Blood** and a remake of **Planet of the Apes**, and **Sergeant Rock** may be dusted off. The ill-fated Crusade is being wooed by three studios, with a decision due soon...Sigourney Weaver is being tempted back into the role of Ripley with an offer of $5m for the fourth **Aliens** movie.

Michael Crichton has been busy. With **Disclosure** over the $80m hurdle in the States, **Congo** due shortly, Jan de Bont (*Speed*) lined up as director of **Twister,** his **E.R.** TV show at the top of the Nielsen ratings and having almost completed the sequel novel to **Jurassic Park**...he's just sold **Sphere** to Warners who have Barry Levinson lined up to direct. It's an underwater adventure about the recovery of an alien sphere which contains a US spaceship from the future. When you consider that **The Abyss** went 40% over budget and Kevin Costner's **Waterworld** has cost in the region of $175 you'd have thought that undersea yarns would be consigned to Davy Jones' Locker...

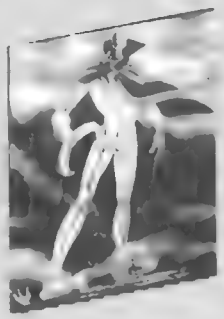
It seems that Quentin Tarantino is to helm the **Man From U.N.C.L.E.** feature in development from Turner Productions. He'll also find a role in it for himself. He's due to star in the $6m **Hands Up** directed by Virginie Thevenet due to shoot in L.A. this summer. U.N.C.L.E. join a rash of TV remakes that includes **Mission:**

ANI

NEWS

The Manga Film Festival kicks off at the National Film Theatre on Friday, May 5 with a screening of **Space Adventure Cobra**, its UK premiere. A week of anime follows with Saturday seeing screenings of **Wings of Honnneamise**, **Wicked City**, **Appleseed**, **Legend of the Overfiend** and a second showing of *Cobra*. The latter will be shown daily, with the addition of **Roujin Z** and **The Professional: Gogol 13** on Sunday, May 7. **Legend of the Overfiend** on Wednesday, May 10, and the long-awaited **Patlabor** on Thursday, May 11. The National Film Theatre is located on the South Bank at Waterloo, for further information call 0171 928 3535.

The Festival then tours the following venues (dates and times



are still to be confirmed as we go to press, but you should be able to learn more by contacting the bracketed phone numbers): Bradford Playhouse & Film Theatre (0274 820 666). Bristol Watershed (0272 276 444). Derby Metro Cinema (0332 340 170). Edinburgh Film House (031 228 2688). Glasgow Film Theatre (041 332 6535). Hull Film Theatre (0482 25017). Leicester Phoenix (0533 554 854). Northampton Forum Cinema (0604 401 006). Norwich Cinema City (0603 622 047). Sheffield The Showroom (0742 763 534). Southampton Harbour Lights (0703 832 611). Further venues are to be announced for June

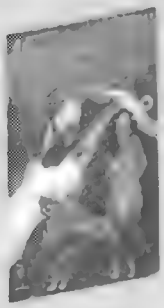
RELEASES

East2West have announced their first titles, namely **8 Man After**, a cyborg cop along the lines of *RoboCop*, to be released on May 1 with a second episode to follow in June, and **The Adventures of Kekkou Kamen**, based on the sexy Japanese high-school superheroine romp by Go Nagai, out May 29 with episode 2 due in July. Both will be 18 certificate. On the live action front there's **The Wicked City** (sound familiar?) produced by Tsui (*A Better Tomorrow*) Hark out on May 1.

Kiseki cancelled the release of the dubbed **Adventure Duo Vol 2** in favour of a subtitled version. Volume 3, just out, is also subtitled. Western Connection have **Slowstep 1** and **2** released at the end of April alongside **Ushio & Tora Vol 4**, and Manga's May line-up launches **Angel Cop** as well as part 2 of **Macross Plus**, act 6 of **Tank Police** and parts 7 & 8 of **Four Kings**. They also have **Godzilla vs Mothra** on the Manga Live label, plus **Tokyo Drifter** and **Branded to Kill** from ICA. Pioneer will be releasing **Kishin Troops** parts one and two in May.

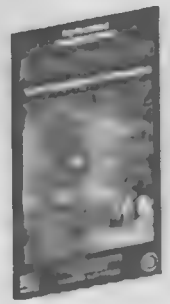
Adventure Duo - Episode 3 *Dir* Dan Kongoji. The third and thankfully final episode of this series. Norikazu and Midori are safely back home, but Norikazu's computer is still linked to Hell and it's King has sent his agent Mephisto to retrieve his son Kingan, now the self-styled servant of Midori. To achieve this, Mephisto joins forces with the demoness Eganko, who wants Norikazu and his arrogant classmate Yushimoto who wants Midori (when he's not blackmailing his music teacher into bondage sessions, that is). Eganko hits on the idea of a love potion, so everyone can get who they want - and that's about as good as the 'plot' gets. Basically, it's the usual unpleasant, misogynist twaddle from the Overfiend creators, only for those who'd buy this stuff anyway. 40 min. Kiseki KIS 94013. Cert 18. Subtitled

Green Legend Ran Vol 3 (1992)

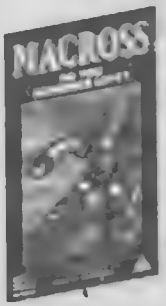


Dir Satoshi Saga. The concluding part of this series sees Ran at Green 5, where Aira has been taken to be presented to the Rodoist arch-bishops. The terrorist faction of the Hazzard, led by Kiba, initiate their attack on the Holy Mother to destroy it completely, but Aira has already been summoned within it by her own kind - the Silver Haired Maidens, who are the human link between the alien force of the Rodo. Soon the true nature of the Holy Mother and its plans for the world are revealed, and Ran, Aira and the others are forced to make their choices to decide the fate of all mankind. A satisfying end to a truly excellent and thought provoking series. 52 min. Pioneer PIO 10011. Cert 12

Kishin Heidan Vol 1 (1993) *Dir* Takaaki Ishiyama. The classic genre of retro robots is making a comeback, with the added advantage of advanced animation. Kishin Heidan harks back to the Golden Era, set on



Earth in the Forties, with some interesting modifications made to our history. Previously in the Thirties, the Japanese Army managed to hold off an invasion by a strange race of organic alien robots, and by using technology from some recovered bodies, built a group of giant robot warriors called the Kishin Corps. They were only



meant for use against the alien invaders, but with the outbreak of the Second World War, the opposing factions want to use it for their own ends. Enter Taishi Takamura, whose parents are killed for the alien module they carry, and who must get it to the Kishin Corp at all costs. This is a fantastic anime, beautifully stylised, animated and coloured, with a good balance of action and characterisation. Another sure fire hit for Pioneer. 58 min. Pioneer PIO 10009. Cert 12.

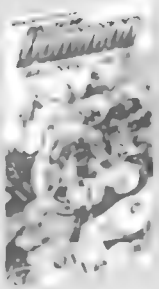
Kishin Heidan Vol 2 (1993) *Dir* Takaaki Ishiyama. Continuing the classically inspired robot series, with two shorter episodes on one tape. Taishi has been rescued from the Japanese Kanto army by Kishin Corp members Balleiho and Daisaku, but the alien module he was guarding has been stolen by

ME

unscrupulous German scientist Eva Braun[1]) The Corp set out to retrieve it, and the giant robot that Braun is attempting to power up for the Kanto army but owing to a mishap by Taishi, the mission fails and Balleiho is captured Overcome with guilt, Taishi has to find a way to undo the damage he has caused and in doing so, earn his own place within the Corp but the aliens are still continuing their attacks on Earth seemingly in response to the use of the mecha powered by their technology 60 min Pioneer PIO 10010 Cert 12

Legend of the Four Kings - Chapters 5-6 (1991) *Dir* Benji Kawabata The Ryudo brothers' saga continues with more nasty political types ruining their attempts to lead normal lives This time they have the mad Dr Tamazawa on their tails sending cyber dogs after them while expressing his desire to perform live dissections on them, while the lovely Lady L has designs of a rather more intimate kind, at least for elder brother Tsuzuku any way As usual, the brothers trash the opposition with their super strength, then get really peeved and turn into dragons causing more collateral damage and injuries than the bad guys If you were able to stick with the Guyver you should be able to put up with this 92 min Manga MANV 1073 Cert 15

Macross - Do You Remember



Love? (1984) The full length feature film of the classic space opera, known best in its *Robotech* incarnation The Macross ship is now only a month away from Earth, after its forced exodus due to the attack of the giant Zentradii Despite the battles still being fought with this enemy human life still goes on, with pilot Hikaru Ichijoe falling for singer Lynn Minmay But soon events take a serious turn, with the discovery that Earth's civilisation has been wiped out by the invaders but also that humans, Zentradii and their female equivalent Meltlani, were all created by an even older race, the Protoculture The race is then on to find a way for all three factions to reforge their links with each other and the answer seems to lie in a song It's good to see such a classic example of anime alongside the latest releases, although prior experience of

Macross would help to understand the subtler nuances of the plot 110 min Kiseki KIS 94016 Cert PG

New Dominion Tank Police - Act 5 (1993) *Dir* Noboru Furuse Manga Video's early popular release is back! Japan 2100 AD suffers from an ever rising crime rate, though this pales in significance to the tactics used by police officer Leona in her tank Bonaparte Complaints from the citizens force the Tank Police to curb it's heavy handed tactics, but a mysterious figure, piloting a new and highly advanced combat robot wants the squad wiped out for good This is a vast improvement on the earlier Dominion series, with the animation matching Shirow's style almost exactly and the dubbers having the sense to leave the original music alone Only the dub seems to slow this down a little, along with a somewhat unnecessary plot explanation at the end but it's still one of Manga's best releases this year 30 min Manga MANV 1075 Cert 15

Oh My Goddess! 1: Moonlight and Cherry Blossoms After the spate of cyberpunk violence and action that started the year off we have here something a little gentler Keiichi Morisato is the young teen

protagonist of this tale, who gets a visitation from the beautiful Norse goddess Belldandy and is told he is eligible to be granted one wish Thinking it's a joke by his friends over his failure to find a girlfriend, he half seriously wishes for Belldandy to stay with him forever and of course it is granted by Belldandy's bosses leaving him stuck with a girlfriend of cosmic power in a student dorm that doesn't allow women This is a beautifully animated, frothy comedy romance, extremely lightweight and to be well avoided by connoisseurs of gore and tentacles, but I highly recommend this to anyone else who prefers something more tasteful 29 min Anime Projects AP095-002 Cert U

Orguss 02 Vol 1 (1993) *Dir* Fumihiko Takayama Manga Video brings out the big mechs again with Orguss 02, a tale of two factions battling it out in a world that's part Old Europe, part Industrial revolution Only it's not cannons they're fighting with, but

Decimators, huge Macross type robots from an earlier, more advanced age The race is on to see which side can gain tactical superiority by unearthing the most Decimators, and caught in the middle is the young mechanic Lean When his boss is killed during an attack on the Decimator they were transporting back to their kingdom, Lean is forced to join the army to help pay off his widow's debts despite the threat of war approaching Soon, he is hurled into the thick of political intrigue and danger where it seems there are enemies on both sides A fantastic anime, with chara designs by the Gunbuster team and a plot that balances all-out action with human drama, this is absolutely unmissable 60 min. Manga MANV 1079 Cert 12

Plastic Little (1994) *Dir* Kinji Yoshimoto The video box blurb "She ain't plastic and she ain't little", gives you some idea of what to expect from this story of a motley crew of space age 'pet hunters' roaming around in a submarine. Their teen captain Trta gets them involved in a whole mess of political intrigue and warfare when she rescues the daughter of a deceased scientist who holds the password to an extremely destructive weapon that everybody seems to want to get hold of The animation looks nice, the plot isn't bad, but the in-yer-face bathroom and dressing scenes served no useful purpose other than padding the story (pun intended), 48 min Kiseki KIS 94004 Cert 15

Pete Taylor/Melissa Hyland

Impossible directed by Brian de Palma and starring Tom Cruise and **Flipper** starring Paul Hogan.

Releases over the summer have been juggled slightly with **Batman Forever** now having a provisional July 14 opening in the UK (June 16 in the States), the same day as the **Mighty Morphin' Power Rangers** movie. **Judge Dredd** should follow a week later, and **Caspar** a week later again. **Waterworld** and **Die Hard With a Vengeance** are now provisionally scheduled for August 11 and 18 respectively.

VIDEO

The Mask leapt to the top of the sales charts in its first week of rental with around three-quarters of a million viewers within seven days. The Jim Carrey movie plus **True Lies** with Arnie (in its second week of release) accounted for about 30% of all video rental business that week.

April releases worth a look in include **Blown Away** with Tommy Lee Jones as a madcap bomber with an Irish accent that can only be described as...interesting, **Highlander 3** which has been knocked in places but makes good late-night viewing, **Body Bags** from John Carpenter for horror fans, **The Flintstones** for the kids, **Pricilla, Queen of the Desert** for a good laugh, and **Pulp Fiction** for everyone. May rental releases include the Tarantino produced **Killing Zoe** and **Mary Shelley's Frankenstein.**

Fans of **The X-Files** without the benefit of Sky will be able to see the second season before it screens on BBC2 thanks to Fox Video who will be releasing the opening three episodes on one rental tape in June. This follows the release of the first four episodes of the first series to retail in May (see feature elsewhere).

Just released by BBC video are two new **Dr Who** titles, **The Pirate Planet** and **The Ribos Operation** both starring Tom Baker and both first aired in 1978. Forthcoming on May 1 are two more 1978 Baker episodes, **The Stones of Blood** and **The Androids of Tara**, plus the first tape of the sixth series of **Red Dwarf** containing three episodes: 'Psirens' (not shown during the recent re-run), 'Legion' and 'Gunmen of the Apocalypse'. The second 'byte' of the series will be released on June 5, containing 'Polymorth II - Emohawk', 'Rimmerworld' and 'Out of Time'.

Killing Zoe (1994). *Dir* Roger Avary. Produced by Quentin Tarantino (who's name appears in larger type than the stars or the director) and his partner in crimes, Lawrence Bender, and directed by *Pulp Fiction* co-writer Avary, you may expect a *Reservoir Dogs*-style crime-goes-wrong movie - and you wouldn't be disappointed. What it removes is the soundtrack, replacing it with an acid trip distortion and fast cuts. This is the best bank robbery standoff since *Dog Day Afternoon*, driven by the octane-

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powered confrontations between the manic Jean-Hughes Auglade - a very nasty piece of work - and the world. It's bloody and violent, a slow burner which explodes in your face half-way through. PolyGram. Cert 18.

White Angel (1994). *Dir* Chris Jones. Low-budget drama about a serial killer who wants his story told. He finds the perfect author in an ex-real life crime writer Ellen Carter (Harriet Robinson) who has killed her husband and thinks she's got away with it. Somewhat akin to *Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer* in the way Peter Firth's deadly dentist character draws Ellen into his world-view. Once they begin to explore the motives and mechanics of their crimes the film becomes compulsive, only to stumble towards the end with an unconvincing twist. 94m. PolyGram. Cert 18.

ANIMATION

The UK based Aardman Animation company have joined forces with Allied Filmmakers to produce original animated feature films, the first due in development later this year and due in production in 1996. Aardman, founded in 1971 by Peter Lord and David Sproxton, were the producers of Nick Park's *Creature Comforts* and *The Wrong Trousers*.

The titles of DreamWorks first two animated features have been announced: **The Prince of Egypt**, based on the Old Testament story of Moses, and **El Dorado: Cortez and the City of Gold.** The former will have music by Hans Zimmer, who just won as Oscar, and is scheduled for Christmas 1998 release.

Two British animated shorts were up for Oscars. Both were produced by Channel Four Films: **Bob's Birthday** and **Triangle.** And the oscar goes to: *Bob's Birthday* by Allison Snowden & David Fine.

TELEVISION

Craig Charles and John Peploe were cleared of rape on March 3, which now clears the way for a seventh series of **Red Dwarf**. A Christmas Special which was due to be filmed last year will also now be made.

Terry Pratchett's Discworld will follow the recent Johnny and the Dead series onto TV.

MAGAZINES

Jack Kirby Quarterly #3 (Feb 1995). The JKQ gets better every issue as editor Chris Harper's confidence grows. This issue prints the text of the Jack Kirby panel from UKCAC '94 plus features by Fabio Barbieri and Mike Kidson and plenty of rare artwork. Price for a single issue is £1.15, plus postage (I imagine). Subscription rates are 4 issues for £4.00 from C. Harper (that's who you make cheques payable to as well), 25 Napier Drive, The Parklands, Tipton, W. Midlands, DY4 7NW.

TripWire (May 1995). A DC/Vertigo special from Joel Meadows (41 Parkside, Mill Hill, London, NW7 2LN) with a good selection of interview material and the usual scathing reviews from Joel who is not afraid of calling a turd a turd. Frank Quitely confesses he used to read *Bunty*, Simon Jowett offers up the story of how he stopped writing for Marvel and became their tea-boy, Jim Alexander contemplates the death of 'Calhab Justice', plus interviews with Peter Milligan and Garth Ennis.

EVENTS

MARTS

22 Apr **Coventry.** University Student Union Building, Priory Street.

22 Apr **Leeds.** Metropolitan University, Brunswick Hall, Merrion Way.

22 Apr **London.** Central Club Hotel, 16-22 Great Russell Street, WC1.

23 Apr **London.** Royal National Hotel, Bedford Way, WC1.

25 Apr-6 May. **LARRY AT WAR**, Chris Beetles Gallery, 8 & 10 Ryder Street, London SW1. Exhibition to launch a new book by cartoonist Larry.

29 Apr **Birmingham.** Carrs Lane Church Centre.

29 Apr **Nottingham.** Victoria Leisure Centre, Gedling Street.

30 Apr **Stevenage.** Leisure Centre, Lytton Way.

6-7 May **MEMORABILIA '95**. The N.E.C., Birmingham. Includes comic auction; to enter items call Strictly Comics Auctions, 0181

TRADING CARDS

Skybox have just released a 90-card set based on the Disney animated show Gargoyles, a group of dark, tenth century stone superheroes; at night they come alive to fight crime in modern-day New York. Just out are the new The Adventures of Batman and Robin set, based on the new series of the animated Batman show. On top of the 90 card main set there are 12 pop-up cards, 3 'Dark Knight' cards which reveal a hidden message when you apply heat (a hand should do it) and 9 foil cards.

Comic Images have a new set of Greg & Tim Hildebrant cards due in May entitled Separate & Together. The all chromium set runs to 90 cards plus the usual bonus and chase cards. At the same time they'll be releasing The Art of Heavy Metal gathering 90 of the best pieces of cover, poster and calendar artwork by Royo, Bell, Bisley, Corben and Olivia.

447 1855.
13 May **Gloucester.** Leisure Centre, Bruton Way.
13 May **Hull.** Comfort Friendly Inn (Valiant House), Anlaby Road.
14 May **London.** Camden Centre, Bidborough Street, WC1.
14 May **FANTASY FAIR.** The Cresset Exhibition Centre, Bretton, Peterborough. Guests include Bryan Talbot, Stephen Gallagher, Peter F. Hamilton, Andrew Harman, Maggie Furey, Rich Parsons and Tony Keaveney. Admission is £1.00. Further information: Bruce King (01480 216 372) or Peter Cox (01733 370 542).
20 May **SCI-CONvention.** Central Club Hotel, 16-22 Great Russell Street, London WC1. Special Guests: Dave 'Darth Vader' Prowse, Sophie 'Ace' Aldred, Colette (Aliens) Hiller, Warwick (Star Wars) Davis, Elizabeth (Dr Who) Sladen. Ticket only. Info/Bookings: 0181 523 1074
20 May **Manchester.** Sachas Hotel, Tibb Street, Piccadilly.
21 May **Cheshunt.** Grundy Park Leisure Centre, Windmill Lane.
21 May **Liverpool.** Gladstone Hotel, Lord Nelson Street.
27 May **MEMORABILIA '95.** City Halls, Glasgow.
27 May **Newcastle.** University of Northumbria, Students' Union Ballroom, Sandyford Road.
27-28 May **ALBION: ROBIN OF SHERWOOD CONVENTION.** Moat House Hotel, Northampton. Further information: Kevin Waters, 14 Judith Road, Kettering, Northants NN16 0NX.
28 May **London.** Camden Centre, Bidborough Street, WC1. Card Mart.

The Multi Media team are: Neil Cooper, Steve Holland, Melissa Hyland, Dave McLoughlin and Pete Taylor. No animals were hurt in the compilation of this column.

UP-FRONT

CONTINUED from page 12

PEOPLE AND PUBLISHING

A desperate call came from young **Warren Ellis** just too late to make it in last month's issue: *Druid #2* is NOT Code Approved. If you're easily shocked, don't risk looking inside; people who are paid to do just that have had a look and decided its unsavoury. A bit of Ellis news which maybe he hasn't even heard: Marvel's latest catalogue is trumpeting the fact that his 'One Nation Under Doom' has pushed sales of *Doom 2099* up 50%, and the rest of the 2099 line up an average 42%.

Neil Gaiman has donated Smut to the Comic Book Legal Defence Fund. Smut being a character from his *Angela* mini-series, of course. Drawn by Greg Capullo, the CBLDF's new mascot will be appearing on t-shirts, buttons and stickers.

Hilary Robinson's 'Zippy Couriers' are returning to comics after an absence of some years, but outside the pages of 2000AD where they previously starred for some five years. The series was the subject of an ownership dispute between Hilary and Fleetway, the latter maintaining that 'Zippy' was now their property, and Hilary stating that she had signed no contracts reliquishing rights to the characters. The dispute was later settled, and new Zippy stories drawn by Graham Higgins are about to appear in *Hungry Hearts* magazine where they star on the cover of #2, available in April.

Masamune Shirow, whose house was destroyed by the Kobe earthquake in January, faced another potential blow since he owns and keeps all his original artwork...which he was thankfully able to rescue from the rubble

After last month's Quotes pointed out the disparity between what creator **Mark Wheatley** and Blackball Comics were saying about the publishing of his *Radical Dreamer*, Wheatley has announced he will be self-publishing the title under the Mark's Giant Economy Size Comics banner: "We'll have a short gap in the schedule due to the changeover, but the story will continue as I originally planned. No-one will miss anything," says Wheatley. A special # -1 issue should ship in June.

Don Heck, one-time Marvel bullpenner, died in January at the age of 66. Born in 1929, he drew love, mystery and horror stories in the early 1950s, although is probably most fondly remembered for his contributions to Marvel's *Avengers, X-Men* and the creation of Iron Man in the pages of *Tales of Suspense* in the early 1960s. Although perhaps overshadowed by the likes of Kirby and Ditko, Heck's simplified and uncluttered artwork nonetheless made him one of the most popular artists from that period.

Sadly, no room to mention **Tony Luke**'s new beard...no wonder he never turned up in Glasgow...

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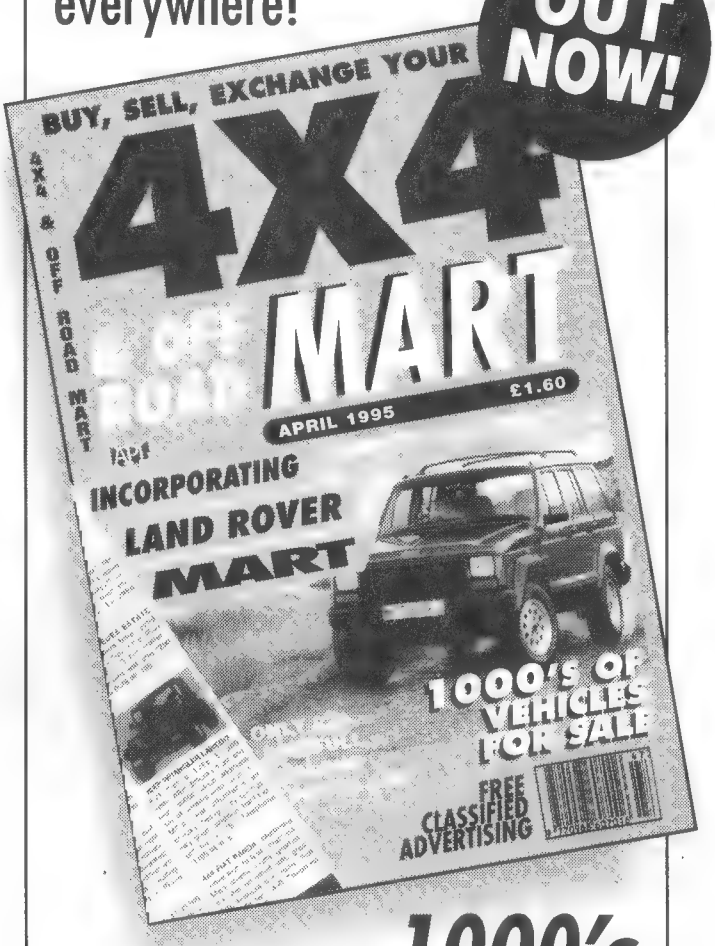

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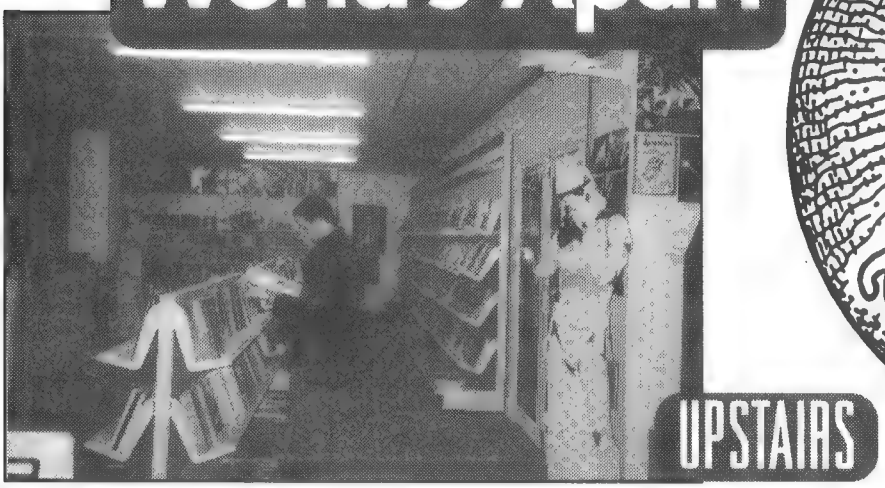


Located in Lime Street, Liverpool, Worlds Apart is one of the country's largest comic retailers. With a total selling space of over 3000 square feet and a whole basement of back issues, you'd think the whole philosophy might be "big is best". But not so: "We like to keep a close, personal attitude both to business and our customers," says owner/manager Sashya Maloney. "Too many retailers tend to see customers as wallets on legs. We try to look to the long term and take the time to talk to them, find out what their likes and dislikes are, get to know them as people. We still have nearly all of our standing order customers from when we originally opened the shop in May 1991."

The first site was opened by Sashya and her partner Simon Curran. "I had been a long-time customer of Ogre Books (now Planet Eater in Southport) and the idea of running my own shop always appealed to me," says Simon. "When the only comic shop in Liverpool city centre, Chapter One, closed down I saw a gap that needed filling." With training from the local Business Training Agency and funding in the form of a grant from the Princes Trust, the search for premises began. "Another shop just beat us to it, but we found a small unit in Acorn Galleries and opened up." Through advertising and word of mouth, business was soon good enough to take on a full-time employee, and this during the worst of the recession. "In fact, looking back," says Sashya, "I'm sometimes amazed at what problems we've overcome." These included power cuts, crumbling ceilings, and draughty windows letting in rain and cold. Once, the drains connected underneath the shop backed up and caused a terrible smell. "I was just thankful I didn't run the bistro upstairs," says Simon, but adds, "At times I wish I had. Stuff like the late shipping of titles, especially by Image, and deliberate mis-solicitation of titles by several publishers cheesed us right off."

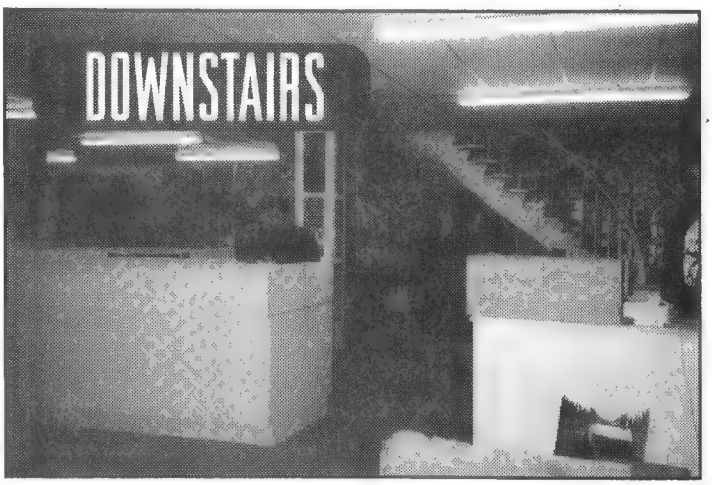
But good times were had. Despite the shop's small size, a *Deadline* signing was hosted with 6 creators. "It was *chaos*," says Sashya. "People queued down the stairs and out of the building. The tables with the creators at them filled the shop on their own, so only 4 or 5 people could get in at a time. Some of the artists seemed a bit worse for wear from drink by the end of the signing, but we hope to do one properly now we have the space."

Space, or the lack of it, was the main reason for moving, according to Simon. "All the stuff we couldn't fit into the shop we had to store in the spare room of our flat. Eventually, it was piled floor to ceiling with boxes of comics. I was getting seriously worried about the floor giving way!" It was then that the lack of suitable, affordable premises became a problem. "We had reached a sales plateau due to our lack of space. I believe a business is like a shark: it must keep moving forward or it will die. We became desperate to move." An added impetus was provided by Forbidden Planet moving into the city in September of last year. "We couldn't match their High Street visibility, what with our being tucked away above street level in a crumbling old building."

But long standing negotiations over a property in busy Lime Street bore fruit in November last year, although relief soon changed to frustration, says Sashya. "When we moved in, the basement started to flood, the fire officer ordered us to install emergency lighting - which we thought was the landlord's responsibility, but they wriggled out of it - and the building was freezing cold. A grant from Liverpool City Challenge paid for some of the things that needed doing, like a pump for the basement and central heating. I've always been one for taking problems in my stride, but I just hope things have settled down now."

Despite these problems, business has more than doubled since the move and continues to grow. "Now we have the space, lots of older stock has been moving and since we opened we have contacted various suppliers of new lines of stock such as toys, figures, books, and plenty of *Star Trek* merchandise. In fact, we intend to specialise in *Star Trek* in a big way. This is due to customers complaining that they are unable to find these items in large chain stores locally. This is an advantage of our hands-on, personal approach benefiting our customers. Something we were able to get off the ground immediately was stocking newsagent distributed magazines not normally available through comic shops, such as music, film and general interest mags. Our aim is to offer a 'one-stop' shopping environment for collectors and more casual customers whatever their interest."

"'95 will be a watershed year for the industry," says Simon. "Marvel's purchase of Heroes World Distribution will hopefully make Diamond and Capital City more hungry for business. They'll be forced to treat bigger shops like ours a lot better. More suppliers means more competition, which is always healthy. Smaller, less professional shops may go, but comic retailers need to get out of the perceived ghetto they're stuck in. We've done it." CW



ABBREVIATIONS

THIS IS A LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS YOU MAY FIND IN THE CLASSIFIEDS & LISTING SECTIONS

M.	Mint Perfect
N.M.	Nearly Mint
V.F./V.F.N.	Very Fine
F.N.	Fine
V.G.	Very Good
G.	Good
F.	Fair
P.	Poor
B.S.	Bookshop Stamp on Cover
T.S.	Taped Spine
R.S.	Rolled Spine
M.C.	Marked Cover
W.B.	Water Bent
P.S.	Price Stamp

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MISCELLANEOUS

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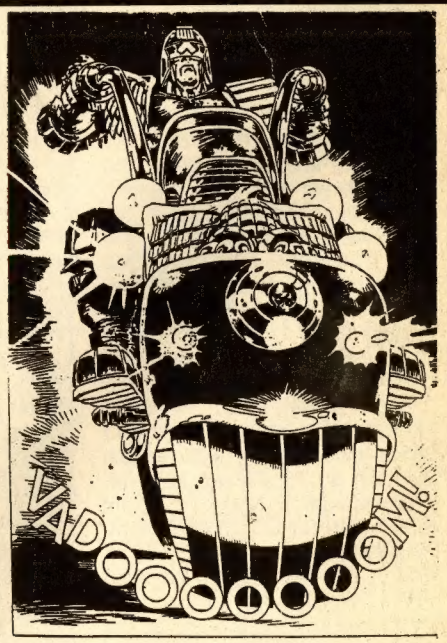

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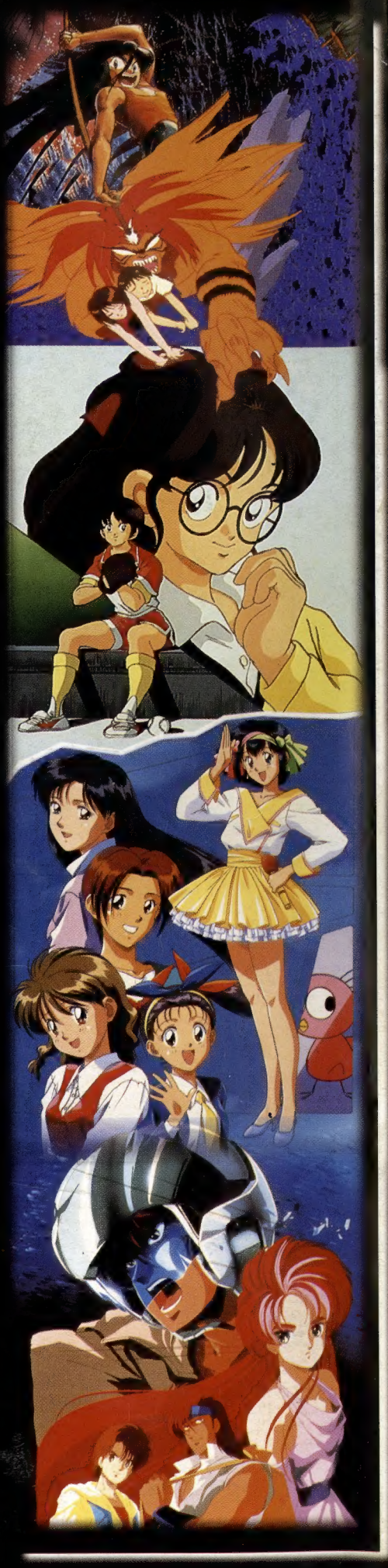

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